

HORIZONS

Volume 27

Spring 2012

Editors:

Essay and Drama Editor: Shawnee Zyskowski

Fiction and Creative Non-Fiction Editor: Deanna Stocker

Poetry Editor: Katelyn Newman

Web Master: Jutiporn Promtong

Faculty Editor: Sandra Young

Life in Motion

Expression is fluid.
Creativity gives life to words, paint, and digital snapshots.

Experience reshapes the world that was once known.
Perceptions change and life becomes something new.

Existence is constant.
No matter how miserable the darkness, it can give way to the light.

Horizons celebrates the writers, poets, and artists of the Scared Heart Community and
the motion of their lives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Art: A Flight at Sunset – Alana Miller
2. Art: Hidden – Brittany Jansen
3. Essay: Yellow – Jessica Luby
4. Prose: I'm Ready Now – Gabrielle Washington
5. Essay: Unheard Of – Ani Sarajian
6. Poem: Cruel Cruel World – Kelley Bligh
7. Essay: Step Right Up Folks – Linda Vichiola-Coppola
8. Art: Church & Chaple – Brittany Jansen
9. Poem: Moonbeam Minx – Justine Q. Bassomb
10. Poem: Mediocrity – Kelley Bligh
11. Prose: Mal – Kaitlin Guinan
12. Prose: Panic – Erin MacDonald
13. Poem: The Drowned – Brent Middleton
14. Poem: Tornado in the Heart – Justine Q. Bassomb
15. Play: A Bird Picking at my Brain – Michael Barbosa
16. Poem: Freezing to Life – Brent Middleton
17. Poem: Untitled – Ryan Farrar
18. Art: Laid Back Sunset – Dominique Wiegel
19. Play: Crayons – Ashley Roemer
20. Essay: The Creation of the Sympathetic Villain in Fritz Lang's M – Laura Hardt
21. Prose: Second City Smile – Colleen Mason
22. Essay: "Wrist Cutters:" A Love Story – Colleen Mason
23. Poem: Don't Sleep – Kelley Bligh
24. Prose : Forgotten Memories – Brianna Vitolo
25. Play: Family Bonding – Lindsay Seppala
26. Art: A World Beyond the Forest – Dominique Wiegel
27. Poem: Brent and Ali vs the World – Brent Middleton
28. Poem: Damaged Silhouette – Julia Zioto
29. Art: Untiled – Samantha Purnell
30. Prose: A Gift of Love – Erin MacDonald
31. Art: Spring Through the Branches– Dominique Wiegel
32. Prose: Forgotten Arms – Brent Middleton
33. Poem: The Trees Sway with Your Holy Song – Justine Q. Bassomb
34. Prose: Subtle Wisdom – Bret Middleton
35. Art: Summertime SHU – Sujatha Herne
36. Prose: Faith – Adam Andexer
37. Art: Hummingbird – Jackie Fede
38. Prose: Linus – Samantha Malachowski
39. Prose: Summertime and Spirituality – Shawnee Zyskowski
40. Art: Flocks – Jennifer Ciaralli
41. Essay: Following the Trail of Ants: An Examination of the Work of E.O. Wilson – Samantha Kee
42. Art: Going for the Goal – Jackie Fede
43. Essay: Memories at Birth – Mathew Wagner
44. Prose: She – Dan Ortzel
45. Essay: The History of Maxwell's Equations – Lindsay Guilmette ---> Inter-disciplinary Writing
First Place Winner
46. Essay: Acceptable Within the Unacceptable Deanna Stocker
47. Art: If Music be the Food of Love, Play On – Jackie Fede
48. Essay: Finding Wisdom – Colleen Mason
49. Poem: Love is a Marriage Tonight – Olga Pinsky
50. Poem: You Wind Sky and Me – Gabrielle Washington
51. Art: Make a Wish – Alana David
52. Poem: Untitled – Ariel David
53. Poem: Back in Time Future – Olga Pinsky
54. Art: Free as You'll Ever be – Samantha Purnell
55. Poem: Undivided – Olga Pinsky
56. Play: Taking out the Trash – Chrisopher Mastrocola
57. Poem: I Can – Gabrielle Washington
58. Play: No Regrets – Max Koski
59. Art: Waterman – Jackie Fede





Yellow

Jessica Luby

I have not slept on my own since freshman year of high school. Every time I voluntarily close my eyes, there he is. My heart begins to beat so fast that I feel like it's going to burst through my ribcage. It is a pain I cannot explain with words, a pain that only I will ever feel, and a pain I choose to ignore with pills.

Ambien a small yellow pill, combined withanax and Melatonin both a chalky white, make for the perfect concoction to allow me to sleep without reliving what I had to experience long ago.

I want to be able to sleep without the pills. I feel like they own me. I take them every night and within twenty minutes, they completely shut me down. I think of nothing, remember nothing; I disappear for eight hours and wake up to a new day.

Tonight, I'm not taking my pills.

Tonight, I'm reliving it, every second of it. And, I will continue to do so until it stops, until it goes away.

October 15, 2008. Exactly one month after my Grandma went to heaven. It had been exactly one month after I was ripped from my fairytale, and placed into a nightmare.

I sleep on the couch. I don't have a bedroom in my parent's house.

Dad is drunk again.

Mom is crying.

Dad and Mom are fighting.

I run away. Dad and Mom do not care. They never bother to look for me. They know I am like a cat; I come home eventually. I have no other choice.

I always run away to the same place, my place. It is about two miles down the road from where my parents live. It is underneath a bridge. It is a little spot overlooking the Farmington River, with huge cement blocks. My cement block has a small hole in it, big enough to stash my supply. I climb up on my block, take out my bowl, pack it using my cell phone as a light, and smoke.

One pull, two pull, three pull, happy again.

I just need to escape. I need to breathe. It feels so good to not feel anything.

One pull, two pull, three pull, happy again. Amidst the process I stare at the river, listen to the pigeons, get bit by mosquitoes, and occasionally, find a good rock to throw to disturb the water. As soon as that rock hits the water, I think of myself, and hate the rock I had just thrown. One pull, two pull, three pull, happy again. This night in particular, while dad is drunk, mom is crying, and dad and mom are fighting, more than just a rock disturbed my peace. A man, tall, flashlight, dressed in blue with a badge was standing above me as I inhaled my third pull. I look up and all I see are his eyes looking down at me in disgust. I exhale as he cuffs me. He throws me against my block and searches me. He rubs me down from head to toe. He rips my sweats and underwear, jams his fingers inside of me, cutting me with his nails. I scream, and quickly he pulls my hair back so hard that I could make no sounds. I hear the zip of his pants, and he whispers in my ear that yellow is his favorite color. After he is done, he lets my hair go, but pulls his gun from his belt. He brushes my hair with the pistol and tells me not to move. He removes the cuffs and walks away. What seems like hours passes, and I do not move. Finally I collapse. I see my bowl on the ground, along with my sweat pants next to it. My underwear is missing. They were yellow. With a little blood trickling down my inner thigh, I put my pants back on, and repack my bowl.

One hit, two hit, three hit. It did not fix anything that had just happened.

I chuck it in the river and walk home.

I lied. I cannot relive this again. Seven years, and I'm still not ready. I'm taking my meds again.

I'm Ready Now

Gabrielle Washington

"Are you Crazy?" The detective looked at the suspect with such vigor, wondering how such a thing could be done. How the killings went about, and why he decided to turn himself in.

There had been seven bodies. All severed at the limbs. The toe nails and fingernails had all been slowly peeled off and placed near the site of his capture. The shavings of skin from the arms and legs had been taking off in a way similar to a slab of meat and shredded like raw beef. The liver, heart, and lungs were taken from the inside of the decapitated body and placed neatly on a picnic blanket, ready for the takeover. He had made a perfect incision from the belly button up and down the abdominals tearing off every piece of fat to get to the organs. Using scissors he cut off the nipples of each body and used them as stamps, applying paint to the tips as a typed of decoration. Sitting patiently on the blanket right outside the gates of Marlborough cemetery, he waits patiently. The detective spots him and his eyes begin to water at not only the odor but at the obscure sight of body parts. Spelled out, with every finger and toe nail, reads, "I'm ready now." On his blanket lay seven plates, each with a heart, two lungs, and a liver decorated in BBQ sauce. Having enough of this sight, he picks the man up and drives him to the interrogation where it began with the question: Are you crazy?

"Hello? Answer me. Do you think you are crazy? Do you know what is right or wrong?"

With a slight smirk, he opens his mouth to finally begin to speak. The most wanted man in Missouri was finally caught. "Now, what exactly do you expect me to say? Do you expect me to answer, 'No I am not crazy' and then you ask me why I did it, expecting once again another answer of 'I don't know,' and we both walk away continuing our lives of meaninglessness? Is that what you expect?"

The officer looked at the man, with a stern face attempting not to give off any emotion he could use.

"No, I don't expect any answer."

"Then officer, let me ask you a question...if you don't mind of course?"

"What is it?"

"Do you think I am crazy?"

"Yes I do...everyone thinks you are crazy."

"Well there it is then."

"What do you mean Van; I am not playing games with you."

"Oh neither am I. I don't know why you asked me for an answer that you seemed to already have instilled in your mind."

Looking confused and annoyed, the officer fixes himself in his chair and straightens up. "Ok what is your poi-" "My point is this. You ask me, am I crazy thinking I have an answer to give, but the definition of crazy is really yet to be determined. Crazy could simply mean thinking or having behavior that is not considered normal, but being crazy, normal, weird. It is all socially reconstructed by people with little minds such as yourself to make other people feel inferior which creates barriers that make our social class today. 'Am I crazy?' you might think so, but in my mind, I am perfectly 'normal.' Everyone's 'normal' is different. Subsequently, you will never ever be able to understand my 'normal' in by which, you won't be able to catch people like me. Without understanding, education seems pointless because I've killed seven people and your master's degree didn't help you a square inch. Ha, I had to turn myself in."

His arrogance seemed to belittle the officer's authority, but still his argument seemed not to attest to his.

The officer had yet one more question to ask: "Why did you do it?"

"Why did I turn myself in?"

"Yes."

“As you know, I have a trade mark with every masterpiece I create. I follow each person for at least two weeks to account for their schedule, and to memorize the times they leave, times they come home, their detours, friends, where they go, why they go, their tendencies, etc. Anything possible I find out. Then one night when I know the mom will be home alone, I break through the garage and go through the back door. I then scour their bodies with cooking knives. It makes things cleaner. Their nails, limbs, skin, nipples, organs all removed and neatly lay out on the floor. Every person I kill is a single mother with only one child, by the way. No dad and very little family. Do you know why I do this?”

As he asks the question many thoughts pass through the officer’s mind. The poor child is being made at victim because of a sick man’s game.

“It’s because it’s a game to you...every part of this is a game.”

“Ah, close, but...no. It takes me two hours to finish going through a body. I’m exhausted afterwards, so then I sleep in her bed and wait till morning for their child to come home. Every child is at least eight or below. The routine usually consists of the child coming into the house and calling for their mother. At this time, I get out of the bed and use the bathroom so the children can hear the flush. The child then runs up the stairs to jump on mommy’s bed, but then finds her dead body lying on the floor, wide open for everyone to see. The child, then terrified, cries and sits on the floor not know what to do. I step out of the house and go to the neighbor’s door, and tell them there has been a murder. The neighbor then goes over, picks up the child and calls 911.”

“Ok? So why did you do it? Why are you telling me this?”

He looks up with frustration seeing how the officer has no patience.

“Listen. When my mother was brutally murdered by a man with no after thought about what he was doing and about the lives he was changing, I stood there. I stood at the foot of my mother’s bed with nothing but a blank face and a sense of loneliness. I had felt the rush of hate despair, and anger boil down to my most inner sanctum of my soul. At age 8 I did not run, I did not sit down, I did not cry, but I did call the police. All they did was cover the body, send me away to an orphanage, gave up and put another story in as a cold case. As you will find out soon enough, there was one more woman who has recently been murdered. This time it was different. I had gone through the normal routine as I usually do but when the child had come in the room. He was silent. He did not sit down, he did not run, and he did not cry. He watched his dead mother be still. I walked out of the house and felt no need to tell the neighbor anything. Do you know where I went officer?”

Feeling weak in the knees his angle for being, and his reason had shined so bright the officer needed to take a moment to clean his eyes out that had almost filled with one single tear.

“You went to the cemetery.”

“Oh you’re finally catching on. Yes, I had went to the cemetery, with all the organs, with the nails, the skin, the nipples, everything. I then Lay out my blankets, set up my stage and put a report in for a murder.”

“You’re such a sick man.”

“Seeing the child’s face, I had known right away the feelings of resentment and despair he had running through his mind. His reaction had fulfilled my meaning of being who I am, and had finally put my rage and anger towards the human race at ease. He is now my successor. You my friend with everything you have been through have not looked close enough. He will be the one you will look for in 10 years. Yes I kill because of anger. Sometimes it gives me a sense of pleasure and joy, but I kill to create what you fail to understand. What the world has failed to understand. I kill to create people like myself. I could have a hit or miss on the seven children who will most probably be drug addicts, probable CEOs, problems to society, or even motivational speakers on how to rise and come above the turmoil of having your mother slaughtered, but as of now, I know one child who shall feel the anguish and continue expressing his anger and rage on the human race, and come up with his own trademark of the art. And for that reason, I turned myself in. For that reason I am ready for whatever punishment you decided to give me, although you will need me later on. You may want to remember that if you put me in the electric chair but either way, for that reason, I was ready. Actually, for that reason...I am ready now.”

Unheard Of

Ani Sarajian

April 24th, 1915: My great-great grandfather is taken from his home, dragged into his backyard and beheaded. My young ten-year-old great grandmother watches, then with her sister goes to the backyard and buries her father's head. This is the day that started it all, then genocide of the Armenians has started by taking all intellectuals and killing them, leaving the women, children and disabled to fend for themselves.

I am a little girl in the sixth grade, standing in a crowd of nearly 8,000 people in the middle of Times Square, NYC; many of them strangers from major cities around the U.S. We are all here for the same cause, recognition and reparations of the Armenian Genocide. A man is speaking; he is different from other speakers. He isn't screaming into the microphone that the Turks are ignorant and they are all awful people; he is telling a story. It is the story of a little girl who stood up to her sixth grade history teacher when he denied the Armenian Genocide. As he closes his story of how the situation played out, I realize something; I had the same encounter with my sixth grade teacher. All of the sudden as people are applauding him I make the connection the little girl the speaker is talking about is me.

1.5 million Armenians are killed from 1915 to 192 . They were beheaded, hung, shot, and exiled through the Syrian Desert without food and water.

In Mr. Smith's sixth grade history class we were asked to write an essay about an event in history. I knew what the Armenian Genocide was, but though learning about it at camp, at seminars and through my dad, I wanted to learn more. After researching it, I wrote about the Armenian Genocide. After class, Mr. Smith pulled me aside and said he couldn't grade my essay. He said, "The Armenian Genocide never occurred." Though he was a history teacher, I looked at him and said, "Mr. Smith, the Armenian Genocide did occur, you can grade it." He looked at me and said that he would try to do so, but he didn't know how much truth there was to the essay. Though discouraged I knew that there was proof that the genocide occurred and even though my teacher couldn't recognize that, I could.

The Young Turks deceived the Armenians. All they provided the Armenians with was nothing but false hope. They killed the men, raped the women, and tortured the others, and sooner or later, they were being separated from family members and killed. Some people in my family who once had a father or a mother, after the genocide...NEVER SAW THEM AGAIN. This is one of the sad and harsh realities that many Armenians went through.

The qualities those experiences instilled in me have allowed me to advocate to non-Armenians at my school who may not be aware of not only the Armenian Genocide, but also other genocides, particularly Darfur. I've created multimedia presentations that have been used for educational purposes for the Armenian Youth Federation around the U.S. and in several public high schools. This recently occurred in June, in my history class' final assessment. Our task was to choose a historical issue or event and examine how it relates to the United States. I chose the Armenian Genocide.

I examined America's recognition of it in the past and contrasted how America's position today has become a political debate, not an issue of historical fact, due to our geopolitical relationship with Turkey. It was important that I did not focus on just the Armenian Genocide, but how unpunished genocides lead to other genocides and what factors led to the United States' action or inaction. The Armenians never let spirits low; they made sure the world knew who they were after surviving the Genocide. The diaspora flourished and today continues to spread the word of our ancestors. We are proud of who we are and we will not be silenced by the Turkish government. The United States has felt pressure to not recognize the Genocide from the Turkish government and the Armenian-Americans will not continue to lobby and protest for recognition, reparations and restitution. Growing up and Armenian-American has taught me lessons that I carry, and will continue to carry with me throughout my life and is one of the things who made me who I am today. Working hard, expanding my horizons and relationships, and having passion for something are a few of those lessons among many others. Within the Armenian-American community I've had a range of experiences that have shaped me into the unique individual I am. Although I may not be fluent in the language, I've spent a lot of time growing up deeply involved in my heritage and learning about it. Every summer since I was nine years old, I've attended Camp Haiastan, an Armenian youth camp in Franklin, Massachusetts. There I've learned conversational Armenian and expanded my knowledge in the history of Armenia and the Armenian Genocide. There I've also made life-long friendships with the amazing and different people that I've had the privilege to meet. Because of this camp I now have friends who live in not just the United States, but expanding all the way to countries such as England, Italy and Egypt. This hasn't just given me fun new friends that live all over the world; it has also shown me all of the various places the Armenian Diaspora has spread to. Not only did I develop these qualities at camp, but also by being involved as a member of the Armenian Youth Federation. From being an active member in this youth group, I've attended AYF Junior Seminar, which is where youth from around the country come together for a weekend filled with multiple lectures by noted Armenian individuals specializing in all aspects of the world in relation to the Genocide. Usually this weekend is themed and one night each chapter puts on a skit on how that year's theme ties together with the Armenian Genocide. Within this group, I have become an advocate for the Armenian Genocide and how the genocide is still a current issue for Armenian-Americans to fight for. This group is something I am proud to be in and it also helps me be in a community that some of my friends from school don't get to partake in. It's really nice to have friends from both communities in my life and having friends in both has helped me expand my life in various ways.

I've traveled to multiple cities nationwide for various protests, demonstrations and events. I've learned to voice my opinion on the current issues and had the opportunity to speak for my generation to the press and political representatives. Standing in these crowds, feelings of pride and passion rush through me. When I'm standing in Times Square, just one ant in the middle of an anthill's colony, I am a part of something that is bigger than myself. It's an exhilarating rush of togetherness, just like a basketball team has on the court after a play to win the championship game. Experiences like these make me feel like I am making a difference with my life. Now that I'm a freshman in college, being knowledgeable in issues most people my age don't know much about, I look back on that little girl who stood up to her teacher in the sixth grade and I applaud and thank her. I do this because if it weren't for the little girl I was and the path that little girl followed; I probably wouldn't have gained all the valuable experiences and lessons that I learned from being an Armenian-American. That little girl's voice was the foundation in shaping me into the person of who I am now.

Cruel Cruel World

Kelley Bligh

cruel cruel world
look what you've done to this baby
innocence poured out of his soul
like blood from his body
forced out of him by this thing
who claimed to be a man
no warnings or signs to the
innocents in its path.
evil exists alongside good this we know
but how could you make everything look the same
evil look just like good look just like us
you've made it fit in
made it fit in
to the naked eye
to unknowing unjaded unfiltered eye
it lured this child in with its
sameness and familiarity
it looks just like his father his uncle and his brother
he supposes even he will look that way when he grows up
he still thinks he will and when he does that
this will be a good thing
that's because he still believes everything you've told him
the lies you've fed
the truths you've hid
he doesn't know about mistrust or untruths
he doesn't know one wrong turn
one no-way-of-knowing wrong choice
can cost a life
can take his
can ruin millions
he still thinks he can ask for directions
and directions are all it will give

cruel cruel world
look what you've made
this stranger who we don't know
we don't know
but assume someone does someone must
that's the way strangers work
just strangers-to-us
but it's a stranger to all
fooled us all with its seeming normalcy
of faked human movements
of faked human emotions
kindness as a form of manipulation
motivated by selfishness
masked by compassion
on its face, but not in its heart

when this boy turns the corner,
it knows he made the wrong turn
and knows what will happen next
though it does not know love
and never ever will

cruel cruel world
why would you do this to my baby
he never learned to see you for what you really are
he never learned that
bad things happen to good people which is best
because he never would have understood why
he left this world confused by
the pain and deceit
inflicted upon him
he knows nothing of violence or hate
but now the rest of us do
you've taught us all well
but cruel cruel world
how could you do that to such a sweet sweet baby

“Step Right Up, Folks!”

Linda Vichiola-Coppola

Coney Island's Topsy the elephant was not unknown to photographers. Browsing through books and websites dedicated to Coney Island's glory during the early 1900's, it is easy to find photos of Topsy as she dutifully entertained crowds. Staring at the snapshots, it is not difficult to imagine the voices of the crowds as they pointed and shouted, "Look at the elephant riding a bike down the street!" or "Let's take a ride on the elephant!" Photographers did not miss these awe inspiring moments of Topsy's career.

Nor did they miss the grand moment of her execution.

On a cold day in January of 1903, a crowd of fifteen hundred spectators assembled at the future site of Coney Island's Luna Amusement Park for the thrill of watching the electrocution of the 28 year old Indian elephant. The event was made possible by the technological genius of Thomas Edison and his company of technicians.

Because of Edison's involvement, the event was considered newsworthy and drew the attention of reporters and photographers. Of all the pictures, there is one greatly publicized and morbid photograph of Topsy's death which remains forever branded on the face of Coney Island's historic past.

At first glance, the grainy black and white picture shown above appears to be of poor quality. Closer inspection reveals that it is not bad photography, but smoke and debris from her electrifying fall. The photographer captured the crowd of people behind her in half motion. This is evident by the half raised arms and a few heads which are turned sideways. The photo was obviously taken only seconds after the lethal dose of AC current ripped through Topsy and brought the stage curtain down on her life. Behind the roped off area of spectators and technicians, is another spectacular amusement in progress: the armature of a half completed rollercoaster.

The nagging question of human morality clouds the viewer's mind, much like the smoke and debris blending grotesquely with Coney Island's winter sky.

Topsy's life as a performing elephant was not an easy one. According to New York Times columnist Ed Boland, Topsy gained her reputation as a temperamental elephant after killing three of her trainers, one of whom fed her a lit cigarette. A history of abusive mishandling caused her to act aggressively.

But, Coney Island Amusement kings Thompson and Dundy were not concerned with the psychology of animal behavior. They were more concerned with the legal risk of having Topsy on their hands. They decided that the best way to avoid further problems was to euthanize the elephant.

Thompson and Dundy decided to use the event as an opportunity to make money off of America's fascination with death and gore.

The entertainment duo brainstormed and came up with the idea of publically killing Topsy via an executioner's style hanging. As Engineering and Technology writer James Pollard explains in his column "The Eccentric Engineer," the idea to hang Topsy was abandoned when the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals intervened and deemed strangulation to be too cruel of a method.

Thompson and Dundy had to find a more humane way to rid themselves of the troublesome elephant.

When Thomas Edison learned of Thompson and Dundy's aborted plan to execute Topsy, he offered to provide a quick and efficient method of disposing them of their troublesome pachyderm (Pollard). This was not because he felt compassion for Topsy and wanted to make sure her life ended as humanely as possible.

Edison was a scientist, and had no personal reservations about using animals in laboratory experiments for the betterment of technology. For nearly two decades, he was on a vendetta to prove that the alternating electrical current patented by his rival George Westinghouse was fatally dangerous. The news of an elephant in need of an efficient death presented Edison with the perfect opportunity to prove his point once and for all.

Edison sent a team of technicians to Coney Island to carry out the procedure along with someone to film the event (Pollard). By sending someone to film the event, he could promote his innovative motion picture camera. Coney Island Museum head Dick Zigun summed up the historic event by quipping, "Coney Island, which was the forefront of pop culture at the turn of the century, brought together electricity, and film and entertainment and cruelty to animals" (Vanderbilt). Thanks to Edison's film, the American Public can be comforted to know that their fascination with death was prevalent even a hundred years ago.

More disturbing than the film itself is the fact that the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals deemed strangulation by hanging as a cruel killing method, but saw nothing inhumane about making a public spectacle of Topsy's execution. The event drew in a large crowd of people who were thirsty for amusement in the dead of winter. By charging admission, Topsy's death proved to be a money making success for Thompson and Dundy. It also proved to be one of the greatest injustices to an innocent animal ever implemented in New York's history.

Edison's film footage still exists and continues to cause outrage among those who wish to view it at Topsy's memorial in Coney Island's Museum (Vanderbilt). For a penny, visitors can step right up to an artsy looking memorial, look into a peephole, and view Edison's disturbing grainy black and white footage depicting the final ten seconds of Topsy's pitiful life. But the photograph of her corpse is not exhibited at the site of this attraction.

That picture says enough without needing colorful art to enhance it. Topsy's fallen body positioned on its side in front of a crowd of curious onlookers remains the true testimonial to her injustice.

In their quest to take amusement to new heights, the owners of Coney Island's Luna Park capitalized off of the American public's curiosity to see a death in progress. While technology has allowed incredible advancements in the amusement park industry over the past century, Topsy's electrocution remains unsurpassed as a public spectacle. The photograph of her death serves as a memorial in itself, a horrific testament of how easily greed and propaganda can rob people of their humanity.

Works Cited

- "Curiosities." Voltini.com. Voltini Sideshows. Web. 7 Nov. 2011
- Pollard, J. "The Eccentric Engineer." *Engineering & Technology* (17509637) 5.15 (2010): 80. Academic Search Premier. Web. 14 Nov. 2011
- Vanderbilt, Tom. "City Lore; They Didn't Forget." *New York Times* 13 July 2003: 3. Academic Search Premier. Web. 1 Nov. 2011.



Moonbeam Minx

Justine Q. Bassomb

Moonbeam Minx
Consumed with passion,
 That sweet minx of Northanger Abbey
Arrayed with gold-studded diamonds
 Leaving men to tarry
Whip your thick tresses!
Call to the wind!
Peer thru your looking glass!
Vanity is sin.

I know not what power she has over me.
My mind reels with her heady scent,
My body craves the mating ritual
Of which man and woman are sent.
She is mine; til the morning
Then she must return to him, her rightful owner
She is mine til the morning
To that despised donor;
Shreds of moonbeam
Drift complacently to my corner.
Where once whispers of eternity
Lie dormant; atrophied.
Moon Minx,
Sneak to my side
Burrow within my chest
Warm me with your furs
Accompany me in self-distress

Belong, do you to another
That means little to anon
Fight I will for you
Under shrouds of darkest cover..

Mediocrity

Kelley Bligh

All good things must come to an end
That's what they all say
For fear of clichés
And their inherent truth
And those things they're always saying
I make a plea to you my dear
That you not make us too good
And bring about our demise
Even though I plan our lives Together
in my head
We must never say it out loud
 I mourn what will never be
 Because it could never be
 That queen sized bed that's all ours
 Where we'd sleep in every Sunday
 Our Monday kiss off to work
 A Friday sigh it's over
 And flop on the couch
 Our couch
 In our very own house
 Half way between your parents and mine
 And it's perfect
 Which is why it will never be
 Our nights we will never spend in
 Watching TV, cooking dinner
 Our days I imagine we spend out
 Walking our dog and playing on the beach
 Because, yes, we still make time to play in my fantasy
Just try not to make us too good my dear
Or we never will play again
Or even be together again
Because nothing this good can stay for too long
I am perfectly happy
Completely content
But for this alone I know it will end
I wait on the edge of forever
For our time together
To split
To sever
Don't get me wrong honey
It's not that I want it
Ever to be over
But I do know that
Right now we're just too good
To survive the rules of love and loss
And I'd rather settle for mediocrity
Than a life without you at all
So please
Whatever you do
Just don't make us too good my dear

Mal
Kaitlin Guinan

When Mallory came home I didn't realize how much I had missed her. Her hair was long and dirty and she was too thin. The marks on her forearms were road maps of secrets I knew she wouldn't tell us, of a place she would hopefully never return. Her eyes were glazed over but less so than usual, like she was surprised the world had given her a second chance. Looking at her, I still couldn't believe the person I love had such demons inside of her. She was hesitant and small but still Mallory, and until my dad picked her up and spun her around, I didn't realize how much I missed her.

Panic

Erin MacDonald

She placed it down on the cluttered counter and began to pace the room. The cold bathroom tile made her shiver, although she found it hard to distinguish what sent the chill up her spine. What had she done? She thought back to that one momentary lapse of judgment. How it lured her in, chewed her up, and spit her out, leaving her feeling hollow and alone. The only comfort she can find in the present moment is the repetition of her steps in her stride across the room.

It stared right back at her from across the room. Glared, almost. She didn't want to let it control her, she couldn't. Why should it? Nothing at this moment felt tangible.

She made her way over to the sink and gazed at her reflection in the mirror. She couldn't even concentrate on the person looking back at her. She kept looking through her and imagining the person she may have to become.

She had to face it. It was inevitable. There was no use in prolonging this moment. She looked down at it. There were two faint blue lines.

The Drowned

Brent Middleton

I'm falling, falling

Faster,

Deeper than I ever have before.

I'm sinking, sinking

Through the sinister depths of unknown waters.

I reach out for the surface in fear of what could be

But draw my hand back almost immediately

driven by what was.

It's only now,

Sifting listlessly through jeweled waters (emerald, ruby)

That I finally understand

That not getting everything I wish for

Is not Sadness.

Tornado in the Heart

Justine Q. Bassomb

Tornado
Earthquake
Floods
Tsunamis
Compared to all disasters
My world
Is anything but harmony
Emotional catastrophes
Screeching symphonies
The heart perpetually
In between emotional resonancies
My smile is loud
Pleasure petit
Dancing feet
Jingle to the mambo beat
Stutters and coughs
Reverses and curses
Loving you
Do you love me?
Can I, never be free?
Of this powerful aroma
Streaking from your pores
From this delicate flower
Resting on your hair
As I count the days
Years
Of our committed commitment
Realization backhands me
Long remembrances
Eternal marriage
Leaves much
Much
To swallow
Years turn into decades,
With me;
Hovering
Standing by
Mimicking
Eyes cry
Stroking
Caressing
Waiting, miles high
When will you get it,
This sweet dedication of mine
Ripping me down
Tearing me apart
The Cyclops

At my back
Limited vision in store
Leaves me with
The same tornado at my door
Pull up the floorboards of my heart
Tear the sheetrock from the arterial walls
Then will you see
The loyalty of me
A small box in the corner
Salvaged from the remaining rubble
Scripted with your name
My love in a bubble
Inside are snapshots
From all our time as “one”
Even from the periods when you said,
“Honey, I’m done.”
Though you are still alive
And the tornado has passed
Misery shields me
Like Styrofoam and glass
You’ve driven through this place
With tank trucks
And battle gear
Still I find myself,
Ever near,
Your voice
Your face
Cheekbones,
Dimples and all
Keeps me safe and sturdy
Within this cliff- fall.

A Bird Picking at My brain: A One-Act Play

Michael Barbosa

CHARACTERS

This play is dedicated to one of the most influential 6 year olds I've ever met, A kid full of imagination and energy, however still a kid with little hope in his future. My little friend's father battled a crack-cocaine addiction for 20 years, and finally won, but his successful victory will never remove the harm and scars he has left on his son.

Narrator: Let me introduce you to Mason. Mason is a rising sophomore at Baker University located in Bakersville, CA. Baker University is steadily improving on its academic integrity, but its Catholic tradition seems to hold back the likes of Mason. In an attempt to find himself, Mason begins experimenting with hallucinogens, but he only finds himself venturing down the dangerous streets of Compton, CA. Here Mason enters a broken down factory and continues to the back of the factory where he finds a secret door. Upon opening the door and venturing inside, he finds himself part of an unknown parallel universe. The door is now gone and Mason must find a way out of this world.

Simon and Says are two characters who play a major part in serving as both the physical and spiritual tour guides in this new world. They dress alike in jester clothes and often embrace Mason. Even though they come off as crazy they seem to have a deeper connection to Mason than he initially knows. Mason serves as the Ego while Simon and Says fluxuate between being the Id and Super-Ego. These two characters play many tricks on Mason and if he plans on escaping this lavish world, Mason must separate what they deem as truth and reality, or forever remain stuck in this alter universe.

General Fran Qua and Random Dan are the other figments of Michael's imagination. General Fran Qua has become an angry individual upon losing his love Lo Mismo. The world that Random Dan and Fran Qua have known to love is slowly fading around them. Random Dan lost his vision, and has grown to accept it, but his friends lack the ability to control of emotions of Fran Qua may lead to his downfall. Follow the magic and see what happens next.

SETTING

Narrator: An unknown parallel universe around noonish on a Saturday morning. Simon and Says are preparing to hop on the phantom bus. They notice a stranger and quickly befriend him. Unable to formulate concrete words, because he is in shock, Mason is quick to join the strangers on an extravagant adventure after being awoken. Here is the encounter between supernatural and natural.

Side of Bus has #1 on it to represent (Scene 1)

When the Narrator speaks, he speaks slowly and in a poetic tone of voice. Action begins in the back on the auditorium before moving onto center stage.

General Fran Qua: ALL ABOARD!

Simon: Wakey, Wakey.

Did you find it yet?

... or is it that you just don't get it?

Wait, sorry have we met?

Sometimes my mind (emphasis and stretches out the wanders) wanders and I forget.

You looked lonely...

... So, I thought why not?

(Simon and Says are looking through Mason's hair.)

SAYS: Hey, did you find it yet?

Or is it that you just don't get it?

Wait, sorry have we met,

Sometimes my mind (Emphasis and stretches out the wonders.) wonders and I forget.

You looked lonely, so I thought why not?

General Henry Fran Qua: (Over the loud speakers.) Buckle up! We will now be proceeding into the Realm of Unlimited Further Imagination, please ensure all hands and items are properly tucked away for your stay. And please restrain from feeding the animals.

(Bus begins traveling towards center stage, going down the aisle.)

Simon: (Talking to Mason.) What kid you doesn't talk?

Says: Tell me you can at least walk.

(Puts hands on chin and begins to stroke his wildly untamed beard.)

Simon: Okay, I bet you're wondering what here is,

So here it is.

(Puts hands on wildly untamed hair.)

(Beat.)

Well it's creativity,

Says: A far cry from simplicity....

(Begins gesturing with hands.)

Simon: Once you enter, it begins in the mind as lucid inception,

Then it'll start creeping up all of our spines finally reaching our souls as divinity.

(Beat.)

Says: But as it rises from its incubation...

Simon: ...slowly percolating, from deep within...

Says: ...the layers and depths of futile deception don't fight it...

Simon: ...as it is manifest destiny.

Says: (Read with a great excitement.) A thought pondered from very high in the sky!

Simon: Now entangled deep within our minds!

Says: And as it settles in its final location,

Simon: Just know that this is something only you and I can truly understand.

Says: He won't get that you idiot;

Here listen kid... there's some rules ya hear?

Therefore, don't you dare.

Simon: For one.

Says: Never entertain a jester's jubilant jawing ways,

Or you'll find yourself entrapped deep within his melodic maze.

Simon: Oh no.

Says: Why is it that you are unfazed in this daze?

Is it because you fail to see what you have done wrong?

This is a game I've been playing with you all along.

Now to listen to my tale and solve it without fail,

Simon: ...or forever remain in this elaborate metaphorical jail.

(Beat.)

What's orange and blue?

Says: A perfect hue correctly correlating on cue

Simon: Do you know who?

Says: Or is it that you are still searching for more clues?

General Henry Fran Qua: (Over the loud speakers.) Next stop... (Beat.) Random Dan's Auditorium, YeeeeeHawwww!

Says: Ahh yes Random Dan's Auditorium.

That is where The Zen Master keeps an eye over the adolescent.

Simon: But not even. He can slow the chase for the ultimate suppressant!

Says: Don't be timid or shy...

Simon: ...little guy.

Says: Questions must be circulating throughout his cerebellum.

Simon: And fear must hover in the lower parts of his mind like Medusa's venom.

Says: Medusa didn't have venom, idiot.

Simon: Rewind.

Says: Tis not the time, are you outta your mind.

Simon: Well aren't you ever so kind.

Says: Hush, and discuss the stuff.

(Beat.)

Simon: Random Dan is a schizophrenic...

Says: ...but is ever so authentic.

Narrator: Simon, Says and Mason dismount from the bus and follow their tour guide General Henry Fran Qua into what is an unknown parallel universe for Mason. Still in shock, Mason finds himself desperately looking for the words necessary to combat the feelings flowing through him during this new experience

A half rabbit, half man runs across stage holding a sign painted Scene #2

The curtains are opened thus revealing Random Dan's Auditorium. Simon and Says appear and the three characters proceed to enter the auditorium.

Random Dan: Welcome colleagues.

(To Mason) I feel as though in your heart you're rather intrigued.

Simon: He's ever so shy Master.

Says: This has all the makings for a disaster.

Random Dan: Do you know what it is that you are looking for my child?

Or is it that you still don't get it, yet?

Mason: Who are you?

Explanations are overdue.

Narrator: Mason is shocked that he is using rhymes.

Mason: Did I just rhyme, or is that I'm losing my mind?

Random Dan: Questions are not for me.

Simon: Don't you see?

Says: He is all that is aspired to be. Random Dan is blind...

Simon: ...but he is ever so kind...

Says: ...in this land of the metaphorically blind,

The one-eyed man serves as king.

Simon: (With a deeper emphasis.) Rewind!

(Characters begin prancing and dancing with a great excitement.)

Says: (Sternly.) Random Dan is blind!

Simon: (Calmer.) But he is ever so kind

Says: In this land of the metaphorically blind,

The one-eyed man serves as king.

Random Dan: Do you know why it is that you are here?

(Random Dan rubs his hands together, a light appears, and Childhood Mason's voice begins escaping and echoing from his hands.)

Childhood Mason: "I wanna hit line drives for you daddy..."

(Voice fades out.)

Random Dan: The root of all that is your fear is in the realm of elaborate thought,

Because it's simply something you have not and will master not.

And that in itself my Child is the ultimate recipe for disaster.

Mason: Hardly amused, I am confused.

Random Dan: I knew your father Mason. He was a man of bad decision. Drugs altered his vision...

Mason: Stop, traveling there you cannot.

Random Dan: Am I pouring salt in your wounds?

First, Hear my tears and all of their tunes

As he fell from Sanity's Towers,

Do you ever think?

Simon: Liberation needs a leader,

Says: And the Gods have chosen you Mason.

Mason: Liberation from what?

Random Dan: Our war isn't one fought physically.

It's fought mentally.

I ask you Mason, have you ever been physically tested,

Then mentally molested?

And is the truth too much for your ears to invest in?

Don't you see life of sin...

Is one you'll never win.

Simon: (Sarcastic.) Not a worry,

Says: (Sarcastic.) Every warrior will reach a "metaphorical euphoria"

Simon and Says: Friends and enemies are all the same.

Random Dan: On that day,

Snow will begin falling from the sky

Like ash from a post apocalyptic sky

Simon: Your father's dead Mason he won't return.

Says: When is it that you will learn?

Random Dan: WE are different people...

Simon: ...different aspirations...

Says: ...yet we are not very different....

Simon, Says and Random Dan together: You and I...

Random Dan: Here's a riddle for you to fiddle with.

Simon: Two men...

Says: ...standing on the wrong side of the tracks...

Simon: ...to catch the wrong train...

Says: ...the sign reads, "Train Approaching."

Simon: One man dies shortly after...

Says: ...the other, well he's on his way to Pennsylvania...

Random Dan: ...do you understand concept...

...that time goes on Mason. However, it is now time for rest my child.

The war is tomorrow.

Unicorn walks across center stage with Scene #3 painted on body

Narrator: Simon and Says are in a playful mood. Let's see what happens.

Simon:

A squirrel stole my nut... (He looks high and low.)

My body reacts...

As the nut is set back.

Shades of lavender.... (Moving his head in a circular motion and begins dancing.)

... Ah yes, I'm a little lad, who loves nuts a tad, but I am not so bad.

Says: (Looking high and low.)Squirrels are lurking on the course,

Drop em' by unleashing gravitational force

I do less and know more

Stupid Pest,

Control this mess,

Pass this test,

Life!

Now give me my nuts Simon. (Pulls his bag of nuts away from Simon and a chase ensues. They chase each other around Mason, but then suddenly stop.)

Mason: Dad, can you hear me up there?

I only ask because some times it feels like you don't care.

Is it a lonely walk into an unknown parallel universe?

Is it normal to ponder whether life's a gift or curse?

Faded,

Jaded,

Hardly elated.

Left questioning how this could get any worse?

Morbid thoughts pondering to the top of my craniums dome,

Fluttering around like butterflies with no home.

(Beat.)

Sprouting from the cracks, lacking common sense

What's the chase without any suspense?

No more words echo through my temporal.

So how can I be a hero, if I can't even be an individual?

Metaphorically, I'm lost,

Therefore, I must now ride into the darkness with General Henry Fran Qua.

Simon: Are you still broken? (Tilts head to the side.)

Says: Still unspoken?

Mason: Jesus Christ, you are a bunch of Jabberwockies

Says: Take a leap of faith...

Simon: ...allow us to explain how our world came to be...

Says: ...it's not all that you have come to see.

Simon: General Fran Qua and Random Dan were once valiant soldiers of the Vadicant.

Says: One they entered the labyrinth all was changed.

Simon: Lo Mismo, General Fran Qua's long lost love.

Says: Random Dan's Beloved Eyes...

Simon: ...both gone...

Says: ...bad decisions.

Simon: Indeed now Fran Qua spends night and day...

Says: ...searching for the wife of his Chalet.

Narrator: Don't be frightened. The stage will grow dark. You will see just the heads of our players. Then a strong light will appear on Fran Qua in the front.

Fran Qua: The sun creeps in

Quietly past your velvet lips of sin,

Settling upon your lust.

Flowing through each other

Intertwined in the mind

You are one of a kind.

(Looking towards the heavens.) We are one,

We are all,

Soon to be the same.

(Looking to the ground.)

You are my never-ending, loving- flower slowly blossoming.

Releasing whispers of sweet nothings.

Echoing sounds of afternoon's delight.

Whatever this is, it's right.

Sweet dreams. Good night.

Until we meet again my love.

(Fran Qua leaves stage and light is now refocused back onto Simon, Says and Mason.)

Simon: Indeed a sad day, it twas.

Says: The voice of Reason is dead.

Simon: That is why we are in the battle.

Simon: As the honey seeps into my eyes...

Says: ...they burn with a yearning to see all that...

Simon: ...they cannot see...

Says: ...Sin...

Simon: ...the Devil's daughter...

Says: ...disguises herself in pretty little black tights...

Simon: ...disconnecting us from the then, when, how and me.

Says: All faith and reason is now dead.

Simon: You were once confused and blinded by the lack of lights.

Says: You shall now see that there is nothing Sacred about this red.

Simon: Lyrical poems serve as the photographic negative nudes to our moods.

Says: But honey seeps out of the hive...

Simon: ...camouflaging distorted dreams of those fighting to stay alive.

Narrator: Now it seems in order to redeem his friends' lost dreams Mason must be all they need him to be.

A leprechaun with Scene #4 on her hat walks across stage

Narrator speaks in front of audience while stage items are moved around for new scene.

Narrator: As the story goes, our hero takes a leap of faith and joins his new friends in the battle. Truly, a coming of age tale, Mason faces a rather difficult decision: Choose whether to stay and live in this strange world forever or forever expunge himself from this alter-universe never to return.

The characters are gathered together in what's left of Random Dan's auditorium, which has now been destroyed because of the war.

Mason: Hemmingway, Fitzgerald even Locke...

Simon: ...were all searching for the ideal world...

Says: ...but fathom this and let it be told...

Simon: ...they searched high and low...

Says: ...but hit a turbulence flow...

Simon: ...and now, that world they look for is in the unknown.

Random Dan: Tell me my child,

Who is the voice of reason?

Do they come and go with the season?

Is he the healers of your lesions?

Simon: Just call this the dawn of all that is reason...

Says: ...it sprouted from the cracks, lacking common sense

Simon: ...my mind's stuck in a class of pleasure and joy...

Says: ...but failure holds the daily lesson.

Random Dan: Magic is all we've ever known.

Simon: Making it easy to miss fairy tales occurring in the unknown.

Says: You don't have to be high to look in the sky.

Simon: And know that much of it is left unknown and alone.

Says: Disconnected.

Simon: From the then...

Says: ...when...

Simon: ...how...

Says: ...and we...

...so as you encounter puff...

Simon: ... and your magical friends...

Says: ...ponder upon cotton clouds...

Simon: ...wondering...

Says: ...hoping...

Random Dan: ...that the sky will open with its hues of purple and orange once again...

Says: ...on a beautiful autumn day.

Random Dan: My emotions too, were once laid at the bottom of an empty pit.

But only you can find them once again Mason.

Simon: This world is ascetically pleasing to the eye...

Says: ...however, snakes slither deep within the rye...

Random Dan: ...signal the goodbyes...

Simon: ...but friendship never dies.

Random Dan: Now that you have been physically tested...

Simon: (Giggling.) ...and mentally molested...

Random Dan: (Serious.)...go back to your world and ask if truth too much for their ears to invest in?

And remember, a life of sin, is one they'll never win.

Simon: The lesson...?

Says: ...well it's a simple one:

Simon: As the great lyricist Eminem once said,

Says: " See children, drugs are bad...

Simon: ...And if you don't believe me, ask ya dad,

Says: ...and if you don't believe him, ask ya mom.”

Mason: A bird is picking at my brain,

A cancer is the center of my pain.

I'm playing this game with a bunch of fishes.

Genie at the bottom so I swim towards my wishes.

White widow, liquid crystal display

The Northern Lights pave the way.

Right or wrong, it's only a decision.

Left or right, it's indecision

Igniting the movement, with the vision.

Questions circulating throughout my cerebellum.

Fear hovers in the background like Medusa's venom.

Yes, it's true the Zen Master does keep an eye over the adolescent,

Not even he can slow the chase for the ultimate suppressant.

Good-bye my friends.

Random Dan, Simon, and Says: Good-bye Mason.

(Lights slowly fade to leave stage in darkness. Only the Narrator remains.)

Narrator: My friends, this is the end of our play.

Blackout.

Freezing to Life

Brent Middleton

Ice crept about his chest
Gently nudging his heart awake.
Across the wintry plains, he squinted
And made out a silhouette whose figure was tinted.

The heavy snowfall pounding against his face
Caused a pause in his determined pace.
Suddenly, his target disappeared
And as his world turned upside down,
he began to tear.

Ice crept about his chest
Encasing his heart in a tightening vest.
His lips grew blue and his eyes grew dry
As he tried to catch his breath afore he died.

And before he knew it, he was in a tight embrace.
He squinted through the creamy white haze
Into the eyes of a girl he hadn't seen in days.

His heart immediately began to burn
And from it, the ice was quickly torn.
He sat up and gazed into her deep blue lakes
Just as the earth began to shiver and quake.

An alarming blue moon suddenly loomed over the two
As if peering from the outside, into a zoo.
The little boy smiled as his imagination whizzed and whirled
And with one final shake, he held the globe up happily and twirled.

Untitled
Ryan Farrar

Last night
I sat outside
with an old friend,
smoking a clove
from last Christmas.

It made me think
of that yellow bird;
the one with mud
caked on her feet,
that flew away
last September
after a summer that
was spent sitting on
beaches and riding
bicycles up and down
countless paths.

For a long time I thought
about going to look in
cities for her, but instead
I realized that
Not all birds have to be yellow.



Crayons

Ashley Roemer

A little girl sits at a table. She looks to be five or six years old. There are several crayons lined up in front of her and she colors in a coloring book. There is a large easel to her left on the stage and a stack of paper right next to her on the table. She focuses on her coloring, not saying a word or responding the entire time. A woman in her early twenties stands above the little girl, watching her color. The lighting on the stage is faded. The woman speaks.

All done? Wow, that looks great. (The young girl pushes the coloring book to the side. Picking it up, the woman shows the picture to the crowd. The picture is colored accurately and within the lines. She closes the book and puts it down. The young girl opens the book again and starts coloring.)

Mom always said our coloring was the prettiest, didn't she? Everybody at school was so jealous of our drawings. Our teacher couldn't believe we colored in the lines so well! It's because Mom taught us.

I still remember when Mom took us to school. She said we had to take a test so they would know where we belonged. She left us in the room with an old lady who asked us a lot of questions about colors and stuff. We didn't tell her the answers though, did we? We thought she just didn't know the answers and if she didn't know, we weren't going to tell her. Mom laughed so hard when we told her that.

We knew our colors. (The woman motions to the crayons lined up in front of the little girl.) That one's blue. It's just like the sky, jeans, or the ocean! And there, that's yellow. Like sunflowers or Cooper, our dog! Green is the next one. That's my favorite! It's like the grass or Christmas trees! We don't like Christmas anymore though, do we? All that green is okay, but not the red. That last crayon is red. Mommy didn't like red very much, did she? We don't like it anymore really, either. (The little girl stops coloring and looks up at the woman. The woman reaches out to grasp the little girl's hands, but the little girl scoots away and looks down. The little girl opens the book and starts to color again.)

That's okay. We don't have to talk about red.

Mom was good at coloring, just like us. She showed us how to do it. She showed us how to color in the lines and make the pictures really pretty. We liked coloring in the lines. Those were our favorite drawings... the ones out of the coloring books. All of the lines were right there for us to use.

We didn't understand why we had to go to school. Mom taught us everything we needed to know. She taught us how to color and she was teaching us our numbers. School wasn't as fun. Mommy left us there. Every day, we asked the teacher why Mom had to leave. She told us that we had to learn and that coloring wasn't okay all the time. We learned about letters and numbers and colors and shapes. The teacher taught us some reading and math. It was okay, but it wasn't coloring.

We wanted to color.

We wanted Mommy.

School wasn't okay for a while. Everybody looked at us like we were different. They looked sad. We wanted them to stop being sad. It made us sad.

Mr. Longer didn't make us sad. He was our favorite teacher. We were older then. It was the 8th grade. He understood that we didn't like red. He used a pencil to grade our assignments, not a red pen. That made us happy. He even took down his Red Sox banner. Who from Boston doesn't like the Red Sox? Us.

(The little girl picks up the red crayon and starts coloring all over the page with it.)

What are you doing? Stop using that! (The woman grabs the red crayon and slams it back down on the table. The woman moves to place a hand on the little girl's shoulder but the little girl moves away.) I'm sorry. I didn't mean to yell. (The little girl starts to color again.)

You know we don't like red. We don't want to use the red like Mommy did, do we?

We don't think Mommy liked red. She never told us so, but we saw it make her sad. Mommy was sad a lot. Daddy told us that Mommy was sick, but she never looked sick. She just looked sad. We thought Mommy didn't like us. Daddy told us we were wrong. He told us Mommy did love us. He told us that she was sick. Being sick made Mommy sad.

She didn't look sick.

Mommy taught us our numbers, not school. And it was with Mommy that we used our numbers. We didn't understand though, did we? Mommy told us only to use those numbers in an emergency. 9-1-1 is only for emergencies. The police would get mad if it wasn't an emergency. She taught us other numbers too. 1- -7-2. That's the number of where we live. 1- -7-2 Cooper Lane. We remembered because it's like Cooper, our dog! He was a good dog.

(The older girl's voice gets quiet.) Mommy told us she loved us. She said she was sorry. We didn't listen to Mommy, though. She told us to stay downstairs and color. She told us that Daddy would be home at 6 o'clock. We learned how to read the clock at school and at home. Mommy taught us, but so did our teacher. So we knew 6 o'clock meant the little hand on the 6 and the big hand on the 12.

Mommy gave us a coloring book and crayons and told us to color. She told us that she needed quiet time. She made Cooper stay downstairs with us.

(The woman sits down at the table with the little girl. The little girl gives her the coloring book and the woman rips several pages out. They both start to color.)

We gave Mommy a big hug and kiss. She told us that she loved us and went upstairs. Cooper tried to follow her but we called him back. He sat next to us while we colored. He always tried to steal my crayons. Cooper would take them and run away. We got mad at him. This time he was good, though. He just sat watching us color. We were having a lot of fun!

We got hungry so we went to the kitchen. Mommy had left a juice box on a chair for us. She left us animal cookies too! They were so yummy! We gave some to Cooper even though we weren't supposed to. He liked them. We went back to our little table in the living room and colored again. Cooper went upstairs. We wanted to go upstairs too. We wanted to show Mommy what we did! We wanted to show her our pretty picture.

It wasn't 6 o'clock yet, though. We didn't listen. The little hand was close to the 6, but the big hand was on the 9. We wanted to show Mommy though, so we went upstairs. The bathroom door was closed. Cooper was sitting there barking. There was white smoke coming out at the bottom of the door. Smoke isn't good. Smoke is bad. We knocked on the door but Mommy didn't answer. We were supposed to wait for Daddy to come home. We weren't supposed to go in. We were afraid Mommy was hurt. We thought there was a fire.

Water started coming out the bottom of the door. Cooper started whimpering. He sounded sad. He started barking again. That's when we went in. We reached up and turned the knob. It was a pretty knob. It was gold and shiny. We thought it was a pretty color. Then, we pushed the door open.

(The little girl picks up the red crayon again and starts scribbling all over her drawing. The woman snatches the crayon away again.)

Stop! Red is bad! We don't like red! (The woman stares at the red crayon and quietly speaks again. Meanwhile, the little girl gets up from the table and starts coloring on the easel.)

Mommy's arms were red. That's the first thing we saw when we opened the door. Mommy was in the tub. She was wearing her clothes though. You're not supposed to wear your clothes in the tub. Cooper ran over to her. He started licking her arms. He was whimpering.

The water was still running. We didn't see a fire. The smoke was coming from the water. The water was everywhere. Our feet got really wet. The water wasn't blue, though. It was red. The red was coming out of Mommy's arms. It made the water red. The red water was all over the bathroom.

Mommy looked like she was sleeping.

We remembered what Mommy taught us. She taught us our numbers, so we used them. We got the phone and pressed 9-1-1. Just like that. A person's voice started talking to us. We told them that Mommy wouldn't wake up. We told them that she was covered in red. They asked where we lived. Mommy taught us that too. Cooper helped us remember. 1- -7-2 Cooper Lane. They said that people were on their way.

We weren't supposed to find Mommy, were we?

(The woman puts the red crayon back on the table. The woman stands up and walks behind the little girl. She reaches out to put her hand on the little girl's shoulder. The little girl moves away and walks off the stage. The woman stands with her hand still outstretched to the little girl as the lights come on full. The woman goes back to the table and picks up the red crayon. She moves back to the easel and slowly starts to color. Her movements are hesitant.)

Cooper sat with me in the bathroom. It was like he was trying to comfort me. I dropped the phone in the water and started to cry. I think I realized Mom wouldn't wake up. All I really remember is the red though. I kept staring at it, even though I was crying.

Dad came home and found me there. He used a bad word and grabbed me quick. I told him that Mom wasn't waking up. I told him how I called 9-1-1. He just kept holding me close and told me everything would be alright. He kept repeating it, like it would make it true. I haven't been alright though. I think Cooper was the only one who understood. After that, only my red crayons went missing.

The doctors didn't save Mom. I never saw her again. Dad brought me to say goodbye to her. We left flowers for her and I traced her name in red. I couldn't stand red. I still can't. That's the last time I used red. (She drops the red crayon abruptly. The next two words are spoken quietly.) Until today.

Dad never wants to talk about Mom. He doesn't really talk to me. It took me a while to realize it's because I look like her. I talk about that with Dr. Copper. She makes me feel comfortable. I know my Dad chose her because of her name. It's so close to Cooper that I liked her immediately as a child. She even let me bring him sometimes.

It was hard for me when Cooper died. There was no red with him, though. He went peacefully.

Mommy left.

(The little girl walks back on-stage and the light fades.)

You're back. You always come back.

(The little girl walks over to the woman and takes her hand.)

Mommy left us. She didn't color in the lines. We won't make the same mistake though, will we? We'll always color in the lines.

We'll never use red again.

(The woman turns the easel to face the audience. She walks off-stage, hand-in-hand with the little girl. The drawing on the easel is of a woman. There is red colored sporadically all over the picture.)

(Blackout.)

The Creation of the Sympathetic Villain in Fritz Lang's *M* by Laura Hardt

The thought of finding sympathy for a man who murders children may seem distressing to some. After all, most consider the act to be among the most depraved that a human being can commit. Fritz Lang's 1931 film *M* seems to argue that it is entirely possible to feel empathetic towards such a madman. The film focuses on the psychopathic Hans Beckert, a man who appears to be responsible for the deaths of countless children. Though he may seem unsavory, Lang, through every technique available to him, manages to turn this "villain" into perhaps the picture's only sympathetic character.

Sympathy for Beckert stems from a wealth of sources in the film, not the least of which is that he is the only character who seems to have any humanity. It would seem that every other character in the film has a preoccupation and obsession with order and routine. Lang emphasizes this through a recurring motif of time and clocks, symbolic of said order. Characters constantly inquire of one another: What time is it? When will someone arrive? When is something going to occur? They constantly look at their watches expecting their lives to fit within a set plan and pattern. The cold, mechanical clock motif is carried out visually as well, permeating almost every aspect of the setting and arrangement of characters in many scenes throughout the film. This can be seen most strikingly at the very beginning of the picture, when a group of children stand in a circle, one in the center. The center child spins around, chanting a macabre rhyme and pointing her finger at her comrades. This systematic game of elimination not only prefigures the deaths of children that are to follow, but reflects the mechanical nature of these people as well. Shot from above, the circle of children at play appears to look almost exactly like a large clock. Their play appears to be no longer a fun pastime, but an involuntary motion that they are somehow compelled to act out as part of their day. Through the use of this motif, Lang has turned the denizens of this world into little more than robotic shells that appear to be people.

The sense of order and mindless completion of tasks that define many characters in *M* only help to emphasize Beckert's humanity. Beckert is the only character that seems to have a soul, who openly shows his emotions and distinct personality. While the characters that populate the background of *M* are essentially devoid of personality and life – even the children – Peter Lorre's portrayal of Beckert is heart-wrenchingly human. Under Lang's skillful direction, the serial murderer becomes childlike, innocent, and diminutive. This deflates any notion of "the demonic serial killer." Instead, Beckert "is shown as pitiful and unremarkable" (Kaes 75). The humanity and depth of character that are seen in Beckert help to make him more identifiable, and, horrifyingly enough, "more real and pitiable than his victims" (McGilligan 155).

Adding to the flatness of characterization of the innocent public is the manner in which they are shot by the camera. Almost every shot that takes place outside is taken from above. In this way, it is all but impossible to distinguish faces and tell one person apart from another. By choosing to shoot people in this manner, Lang has in effect dehumanized them by taking away their identity. Because of this, the audience can feel no emotion towards them – it is difficult to feel for a character that you never truly see. The fact that these individuals are shot from above also places the viewer on a completely different level from them. They are not face to face with the audience; no connection between the two can be established. Though Beckert is initially photographed from behind or in shadow, making him as flat and faceless as those who surround him, once his face is shown for the first time, the viewer is almost always on the same level as him, seeing what he sees, and most importantly: seeing his face. This establishes a bond between audience and character. Simply seeing Beckert's face gives him a sense of humanity, and allows the viewer to feel emotion and sympathy for him. Not only does the audience see Beckert's face: they also see his emotional state painted boldly upon it. This is in stark contrast to how Lang shows the faces of other characters (when he chooses to do so). Where Beckert's face is almost always clearly shown, other character's faces are often obscured in some way. This is frequently done by placing them slightly behind other characters, or behind a "veil" of sorts, such as cigarette smoke or shadow. Lorre shows the wide range of emotions that the character of Beckert feels not only with his expressive face, but his entire body as well. Again, this is unlike all other characters: their faces are stony and almost devoid of emotion, their bodies rigid and straight, even when overcome by "passionate" outbursts of rage.

Perhaps strangest of all, Lang manages to transform characters the viewer “should” find sympathy for into shells devoid of humanity as well. This is seen most clearly in the character of Mrs. Beckman, whose daughter is kidnapped and murdered at the start of the film. Even when it becomes clear that her daughter will never again return home, Mrs. Beckman is shown simply walking around her home, mechanically completing her daily chores. Here, Lang uses sound to emotionally draw the audience away from her, making it difficult to feel sympathy. The voice of Mrs. Beckman can be heard plaintively calling out for her missing daughter, but it is essentially detached from her body. Accompanying her cries are images of the deserted apartment building, and an empty chair where Elsie presumably would have been seated down to eat. Through the absence of her face, only hearing her voice, the audience is suddenly one step removed from the grieving mother. Any sense of concern was all but impossible to detect in her behavior until her cries began – thus, the image of the sorrowful mother is no longer connected to the woman the audience had previously seen. Though viewers “should” feel sorry for the situation that she is now in, the disconnection that Lang created through sound dilutes the emotion. By portraying the characters that populate the world of *M* as mechanical and almost devoid of any emotion, Lang emphasizes Beckert’s humanity, causing the audience to easily find sympathy for him.

Over the course of the picture, Lang makes it painfully clear to the audience that Beckert has no control over his actions. Knowing that he is essentially “not responsible” for his crimes makes him easier to empathize with and feel compassion for. This fact becomes obvious the first time the viewer ever sees Beckert’s face. When a handwriting analyst is called to examine a letter that the murderer sent to the police and newspapers, he details many traits that define this particular psychopath. One such trait is that there is a likelihood that he enjoys “play-acting.” The very second that these words are spoken, the image of the erudite analyst suddenly cuts away to Beckert looking into a mirror, playing with his face while making grotesque expressions. Though this scene only lasts a matter of seconds before returning to the image of the handwriting analyst, it is vitally important in raising the audience’s awareness that there are essentially two “sides” to this man, one of which he has no control over. With this concept in mind, it is easy to see why Lang decided to use the image of Beckert gazing upon himself in a mirror, seemingly “playing” at madness. There are two Beckerts present in the scene: the one who is looking into the glass, and the one whose image is present in the glass. In a way, his reflection “reveals the torments of [his] soul” (McGilligan 148). The way in which he purposely contorts his facial features to “mimic” psychosis seems to hint that this is the only way in which he can feel in “control” over the demons that torment him. He forces himself to look the part of a crazed madman, an identity that he does not readily accept or desire. Beckert’s grotesque expressions reflect the confusion, pain, and anguish that he is suffering inside. He longs to gain power over his actions, but knows that attempting to do so is as foolish as believing that his reflection and himself are two separate beings. This few seconds of footage instantly provides the audience with the impression that Beckert cannot control what he does, but longs to – in order to stop himself from committing these violent acts. At several other points in the film, Lang uses this image of Beckert looking upon his reflection in glass to emphasize this truth.

Lang also uses sound to convey the notion that Beckert is not in command of his actions. *M*, unusually, has no background music serving as a soundtrack for the action onscreen (McGilligan 155). The only music that is heard comes from the characters in the movie themselves, in the form of whistling or playing an instrument. But these instances are few and far between. Lang uses the leitmotif, or recurring musical theme, of Grieg’s “In the Hall of the Mountain King” to signify the appearance or presence of the murderer. Lang’s choice of this tune may be seen as symbolic. The piece is selected from the musical accompaniment to the play *Peer Gynt*, from a scene in which hellish trolls sing “slaughter him, slaughter him, tear him up, tear him up” in reference to the play’s protagonist. This can be seen as both an unconscious way for Beckert to express his longing for “the punishment that he expects and wants” (Kaes 21) for his deeds, as well as foreshadowing the cries of the court of criminals that indict him at the end of the film. The audience becomes aware of Beckert’s presence by his incessant whistling of the tune. While it is obvious that Lang chose to use this in order to signify his appearance in a scene, it can be argued that this uncontrollable whistling also gives the impression that Beckert cannot control his actions. The whistle is essentially a nervous verbal “tic,” something that Beckert does shortly before committing an atrocity. It is almost as though the tune is a “trigger” for the unsavory, uncontrollable side of Beckert to awaken, forcing him to commit unspeakable acts (Kaes 20).

In many cases, Beckert seems to be mentally stable, until he sees a young girl – then, he begins to whistle this song. Much like his reflection in a mirrored surface, the whistling of “In the Hall of the Mountain King” shows how Beckert’s personality is evenly bisected; it is painfully obvious that he cannot control his behavior. Because of this, he appears all the more innocent and blameless, causing the audience to take pity on him.

In the world of *M*, the public seems to have a sick fascination with crime and violence, simultaneously excited and repulsed by sensational news. Hans Beckert, on the other hand, commits the crimes that the denizens of this world are so enthralled with – yet he feels uncomfortable and sick about doing so. This odd contradiction forces the audience to question whether it is the “innocent” public or the murderer who is truly evil. On more than one occasion during the film, Lang chooses to depict an excited crowd talking with wonder and disgust about an atrocious happening. Often, these crowds are gazing upon large posters and placards posted in public locations that detail gruesome events. Lang seems to comment that “murder [has become] a media event” (Kaes 38), as opposed to a real life tragedy. Not only is this image of excitement over tragedy disturbing, the fact that Lang has chosen to shoot the crowds from behind deprives these people of their humanity by erasing their faces. In this way, an already distressing image becomes doubly so. The public’s sick fascination is perhaps most disturbingly portrayed once again by the “sympathetic” character of Elsie’s mother. While she waits for her errant daughter, a postman comes to her door bearing the latest serial of pulp fiction that she subscribes to, a magazine noted for its sensational and lurid stories. Through Lang’s use of intercutting, the audience sees that she receives this publication that speaks plainly of unimaginable violence while her daughter is spirited away by the murderer. The fact that Elsie’s mother subscribes to such a publication is incredibly disturbing when juxtaposed with the horrifying image of her child being led away to her doom.

Once again, the character of Beckert, though he is the villain of the film, is shown to be more sympathetic than the townspeople he “terrorizes” by his disgusted attitude towards the atrocities that he knows he cannot help but commit. In one arresting scene, Beckert is shown gazing into a shop window at some cutlery. The image is shot from inside the shop window, showing Beckert through the glass and framing his image in a reflection: a diamond constructed of knives that are on display. Lang expressively illustrates the madman’s violent tendencies in this shot. However, Beckert’s face is not at ease, nor is it calm. His expression is contorted; he appears to be suffering from intense pain and anguish. The reason for his suffering becomes clear when the camera’s position shifts to record the same image, but from a different angle. Now, the audience is able to see what Beckert sees: the reflection of a young girl who is standing behind him, framed in the same diamond constructed of knives. It is clear that her position in the reflection is evocative of Beckert’s desire to commit violence on her. However, his expression as seen through the same glass is one of sorrow and pain. He is not gleeful at the thought of killing another innocent child. In fact, the notion appalls him. This essentially “confirms his [later] claim that he kills against his will” (Kaes 61). As mentioned previously, Lang again makes use of the killer’s face in a reflection to illustrate his dual personality, as well as his pain in the fact that he cannot rein in his impulses. The same ideas that enthrall and excite an entire town horrify a man who actually commits these violent acts. It is through this distressing paradox that Lang presents Beckert as sympathetic.

In the world Lang creates for *M*, the systems of justice that would attempt to right Beckert’s wrongs clash strongly with the viewer’s sense of fairness and truth. Because of this, the audience is somewhat compelled to feel for the criminal, almost hoping that he avoid capture. Lang shows that there are two groups who are searching for Beckert, in order to capture him and punish him for what he has done. One is a system of “traditional” justice that the audience would feel a natural tendency to support – the police. The other group searching for Beckert is a network of organized criminals that the audience is not as willing to advocate. Lang crafts a distressing visual analogy between the two groups through the use of intercutting. In a scene where leaders of the underground crime syndicate sit around a table to discuss their plans for finding Beckert, “as his actions have disrupted their activity” (McGilligan 150), the image of crime bosses enrobed in the suffocating smoke of cigarettes cuts away to a similar discussion that is being carried on by the police. The police are arranged in a manner that is almost identical to the criminals. They too are shrouded in smoke. Lang cuts quickly between the two discussions as the conversations grow more intense. It becomes clear to the viewer that the criminals and the police are mirror images of one another, with members of both groups gesturing in identical ways and speaking almost identical dialogue.

The visual comparison that Lang appears to be making is one that places the police on the same level as the criminals, perhaps hinting at the idea that the two groups are not so dissimilar. The metaphor can even be taken so far as to suggest that the cigarette smoke that enfolds the two groups is representative of the murky motivations and goals that they share.

It is important to note that it is not the police who apprehend Beckert; it is the criminals who catch him first. Again, the concept of “justice” being carried out by criminals can be taken as Lang’s comment on the corruption of the penal system. Everything about this “court” is portrayed as barbaric, from its dank, shadowy location to the manner in which Beckert was caught: by being literally “branded” as a murderer and hunted down as though he were an animal. Beckert is placed before a jury that will also serve as his executioners, consisting of lowlifes who are filled with an unquenchable rage. In many ways, the anger that they feel is more animalistic and demonic than human: their faces becoming contorted and grotesque, their voices becoming little more than indistinct cries for blood reflecting an “insane public demand for a culprit” (aes 2). In this way, the character of Beckert is reflected as pathetic and innocent contrasting those who would accuse him. Though he begs and pleads for mercy, his face and body twisting in pain, the “court” refuses to allow him freedom, or even a stint in an asylum. Instead, they laugh maniacally at his suffering. In this way, Lang juxtaposes killer with victim and police with criminals. Once again, the audience is “roped into sympathy with ‘this monster who doesn’t deserve to live’” (McGilligan 158).

Fritz Lang’s *M* openly toys with the notion that a murderer can be presented in a sympathetic light. By using several different editing techniques, as well as the new development of sound, Lang was able to achieve just that. *M* calls into question the traditional idea of evil, making it easier to feel sympathy for a psychopath than those who he has terrorized.

Works Cited

- aes, Anton. *BFI Film Classics: M*. London: BFI Publishing, 2000.
- McGilligan, Patrick. *Fritz Lang: The Nature of the Beast*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997.

Second City Simile

Conor Gereg

Gordon Watley knocked twice on the outside of the office door with the name MAX SUMMERS engraved. He still had time to turn back. Back across the hallway and down the elevator out into the rich September air. Instead Gordon took a deep breath and turned the handle to the door and crept his way through, the door heavy against his frail body as he slid in.

The rush of light from the large windows of the office flooded Gordon's eyes. Outside the window structures rose into the skyline; Willis tower, Prudential Plaza building, North Pier, John Hancock center, Gordon could see it all. He'd lived in the city for nearly twenty years and had never seen the skyline so proudly displayed against the pale blue sky.

"Um, Mr. Summers?" Gordon said shyly still holding onto door. The word Mr. felt strange to Gordon. He wasn't sure how he should address Max.

"Yes, yes, have a seat I'll be with you in a minute." Max said, his fingers tapping rapidly on his keyboard—the back of Max's head was full with thick dark hair.

Gordon dropped his briefcase at his feet and seated himself in front of Max's desk. Afraid that the briefcase would sound hollow, giving potential employers the impression he had little employment prospects, Gordon filled the case with day old newspapers and month old magazines that had previously been used to level an uneven coffee table in his living room. Gordon cleared his throat while Max finished typing the last few lines on an email before turning to greet his guest.

"Sorry about that." Max said spinning around in his chair, his features clean and his hair a crisp gelled texture. "You must be..." he glanced down at his schedule for the day. "Um, lets see, you are," humming as he scanned. "Gordon. Oh you're Holly's friend aren't you?"

Gordon wanted to smile. He'd been dating Holly for nearly nine months but in the eyes of Max, her ex husband, Gordon's relationship with Holly was just simply a friendship. Gordon didn't seem to mind. He swallowed his pride and said, "Yes, that's me. I really appreciate her arranging this interview."

Max smiled and nodded as he leafed through a stack of papers inside a manila folder. Gordon could still hear Holly's voice in the phone call he made from the parking lot before the interview. "A lot of people are intimidated by Max. He's a nice guy" she said, "until you get to know him." Gordon adjusted his tie tried to focus his eyes on Max.

"So I'm looking at your résumé here Gordon," Max paused and scratched his eyebrow with his pen. "And although I don't see a whole lot of corporate experience here, I'll take Holly's word that you're qualified, for at least an interview." Max looked up from the stack of papers and gave Gordon a look of I'll give you five minutes to impress me, justify your existence, "Why don't you tell me what you see for yourself here at South Side Integrated Utilities?"

Gordon cleared his throat again. Beads of sweat forming above his brow. For the past fifteen years he'd worked as a driving instructor just outside the city until a morning last week when he sat the day with the Moylan sisters. Their mother, Patricia Moylan, was notoriously known as "The worst driver in Layton, Illinois," her head often seen just peering over the dashboard running red lights and cruising through stop signs that her daughters referred to as "stoptional." Knowing he was to spend that day instructing a new generation of dangerous drivers, Gordon tripled his Xanax and tried to remain calm while only equipped with a break pedal in his passenger seat. Gordon woke up later that day to find his seat belt tight against his body and Krissy Moylan crying, her hands folded on the steering wheel as the car sat parked on the onramp of highway 15. Gordon snapped back into the moment to find Max staring back at him, his pen tapping against his marble desk.

"I know this city Mr. Summers." Gordon said.

"Please, please." Max interrupted. "Mr. Summers is my father. Refer to me as Max. Really."

“Well, like I said, I know this city. I’ve spent my life here. This company could use someone who understands the people here, understands how to make this organization appeal to all them,” Gordon pointed out the window to the city. “The people out there.” He felt strong and powerful. Momentarily however. Gordon had no idea what South Side Integrated Utilities was or what type of position he was asking Max for. Gordon knew that he had no idea what kind of job he was asking. All Gordon knew was that he wanted something that would make Holly happy when she came home from work that night.

“Well Gordon, we actually don’t work specifically with any customers. Most of our work is contracted through state and federal governments, making our job more direct and ultimately more efficient.” He continued while Gordon examined the watch on Max’s wrist. Gold plated and with a thick silver face. Underneath the watch Gordon stared at the hair on Max’s arm that rooted out of his cuff link and climbed up his hand like the ivy clinging to the outfield bricks at Wrigley Field. Gordon only heard bits and pieces of what Max was saying, his words filled Gordon’s mind like loose letters falling from a scrabble table: federal subsidies, vertical management, unintended consequence, fiscal responsibility, I think you could work out here but..., not going to waste your time, Max stopped speaking and leaned forward in leather chair. The air conditioning overhead clicked on, seeping cool air in Gordon’s direction and drying the sweat on his forehead. “So Gordon, what do you think about that?”

As if waking up mid-conversation Gordon replied “This is exactly what I’m looking for.” Gordon crossed his legs and brushed the lint from his pants.

“It’s nice hear that you’re so eager, SSIU could certainly use someone with your outlook.” The computer screen behind Max went into screensaver mode, displaying a picture of Max with Holly’s son David on a boat, both proudly holding the weight of a freshly caught marlin across their chests, cigars hanging from each of their mouths. “Unfortunately we’ve been forced to apply a temporary hiring freeze due to the economic climate,” Max continued, over Max’s shoulder more photos shown across the screen. A photo of Max, hiking up a dirt path, his shirt off and sweat running down his body highlighting the definition of his muscles. Another photo streamed across, this time of Holly and Max holding each other laughing with a picturesque sunset illuminating their smiles. Gordon looked away. “I would love to find a place for you here Gordon but quite honestly my hands are tied.” Max reclined in his chair and folded his arms across his chest, “You understand.”

Gordon only understood from Max’s voice that he would be leaving without a job and without any good news to report. Tonight’s dinnertime conversation with Holly wouldn’t include Gordon’s ability to impress her ex husband. He knew he wouldn’t be delivering any news that would give her the same smile that Gordon had seen stretch across her face in screensaver photos with Max.

Max rose from his chair and stretched an open hand out to Gordon. “It was great meeting you today Gordon. If things loosen up I’ll be sure to arrange another meeting with you.”

Gordon pushed back from his chair, briefcase in hand, and thanked Max. He felt wrong thanking a man who had left Holly after a three year marriage citing that the couple seemed to be “moving in different directions.”

The setting sun still felt warm against Gordon’s face as he exited Max’s office building, the streets busy with late afternoon traffic. His underarms still wet and his shoes damp with sweat. He pulled his keys from his pocket as he approached his car, a thick ring of keys that looked as if they’d belonged to a high school custodian, each key at one time serving a purpose for Gordon: A spare key to the apartment he owned ten years earlier on Lavender Ave., a key to Holly’s garage, a key to a set of lost luggage. As he turned the key to start the engine, Gordon tried to forget Max’s high-rise office suite and the luxury that came with being Max Summers. Gordon left the parking lot and two thick black streaks on the asphalt outside of Max’s office building.

On his way to Holly's Gordon found himself parked alongside highway 7 , only a few miles from her house, Gordon watched the red and blue lights behind him flash on the tall hanging trees above his car.

The officer slid from his car and made his way towards Gordon's rusted station wagon, shining his flashlight through the early evening twilight and into the mirrors of the car, blinding Gordon.

"License and re-"

"Registration, yeah, yeah, yeah." Gordon handed the materials to the officer who cast a shadowy figure in the lights of the traffic that whizzed past.

The officer took a moment, and then raised his flashlight into Gordon eyes. He examined the photo ID and then shone the flashlight back into Gordon's face. The photo was taken three years ago when Gordon had what he called his "bristle head," a head of hair so thick that Gordon bragged that he could pass for twenty something.

"This uh, photo doesn't really look like you Mr. Whitley,"

"Well it is me. And it's Watley. Gordon Watley." Gordon pulled at the knot in his tie.

"You sure did lose a lot of..." his voice trailed off as the officer pulled the card closer to his face.

"Officer, you do understand that I was only keeping pace with traffic ahead of me. There were dozens of cars you could have pulled over." Gordon could feel his voice rising. "You could have pulled over any of these cars." Gordon pointed the line of cars that whizzed past the officer arched backside.

The officer paused again and took a long deep breath. "You ever go hunting Mr.," he glanced back down and read the name on the ID. "Watley?"

"No. No I haven't. I don't see the correlation here but go ahead, enlighten me."

"When you hunt you don't aim to shoot the entire flock of geese," The officer leaned his arms against Gordon's car, his head only inches from Gordon's. "You aim for just one, and then you fire." Gordon wiped the dust from his dashboard with a single greasy finger, he didn't know how else to show disinterest. "It's complete chance that I happened to choose you out of the hundreds that choose to defy the prescribed speed limit."

Gordon he slouched further into his seat as the officer walked back to his car to run Gordon's information to dispatch before writing up a ticket.

There were a few lights on when Gordon arrived at Holly's house and even after the altercation with highway police he still managed to arrive at the house minutes before she arrived, enough time to start dinner, set the table, and uncork a bottle of her favorite wine, something Gordon was sure that Max had never done for her. As he climbed up the steps of the house Gordon felt the crumpled speeding ticket stuffed into the front pocket of his jacket pushing his ring of keys into his ribs. He pulled the keys from his pocket and sifted through until he found the familiar key to the front door.

The inside of the house was warm, still clinging to the air warmed by the day's late autumn sun. Gordon flicked on the kitchen lights, illuminating Holly's dining room table, a deep rich mahogany, her son David's backpack that sat thrown across the countertop. At Gordon's feet growled Holly's dog, Pearl. A Japanese Chin or Chan, Gordon hated dogs. Gordon cleared off David's bag and began to boil water in preparation for dinner.

"Hey Dave?" Gordon hollered, his voice echoing in the silence of the house. "You here, buddy?"

The house remained silent and for the first time all day Gordon felt relaxed, alone in the stillness of Holly's house. Gordon continued his evening preparations, sponging off the stovetops, setting placemats, and began slicing bits of chicken and dropping them into a sizzling linoleum pan. Gordon took great pride in cooking for Holly. It was one of the few things he felt he could do for her. Although they'd only been together for a mere nine months, Gordon relished the sense of familiarity he'd seemed to have developed with her. Preparing dinner, shoveling away snow from the doorsteps, occasionally picking up David from school, it all amounted to Gordon feeling as if he had responsibility to someone more than just himself. He felt as if he belonged, finally, to a family.

The smell of smoke invaded Gordon's nostrils leading him to pick his head up from the stove and survey the room for the source, the sliced chicken crackling in the hot pan behind him. He crept over to the back door following his nose and continued past the table set with plates and silverware, and slid open the glass sliding door to the porch to find David sitting on the edge of the rail, legs dangling as he puffed a long and slow drag from a cigarette.

"Dave?" Gordon squinted his eyes, convinced that it couldn't be David whose fiery ashes dropped to the deck's worn floor boards.

Dave hopped down off of the railing, tossing the cigarette into the darkness and gathered himself as if Gordon had walked in on him in the shower. "Shit, shit, Gordon what the fuck."

"You smoke? What are you thinking kid?" Gordon ran his hand through his thin strands of hair. "Emphysema, lung cancer, stroke?" Gordon's voice sounded strange to him, never had he ever scorned David. He'd made a point to keep his conversations friendly, topical, but for the first time in Gordon's life he felt like a father.

"Gordon man, please, please don't tell mom—" David jumped, a screeching sound came from inside the house and pierced the air, causing Gordon to spin around to find Holly swatting a cloud of thick gray smoke away from the fire alarm with her suit jacket, her work bags still hanging from her free hand. David brushed the smell of the cigarette from his shirt and followed Gordon back into the house.

"Gordy, I'm just guessing," Holly continued to swat the smoke away, Pearl barking at her ankles, Holly's jacket thrown back and forth like windshield wipers, "but I think whatever it is you have in that pan is done."

Gordon ran over to the stove and turned the burner switch to the off position, slapping the smoke away from his face as the smoke alarm faded to a mere squeal before silencing completely. "Still good, still good," Gordon sang encouragingly, reaching for the spatula. He ignored the charred bottom side of the chicken and added a splash of olive oil to the dry pan. Gordon needed to salvage this meal. He believed that had the dinner gone smoothly Holly might just forget to ask about his interview with Max. He felt her hands rest on his shoulders, quickly followed by her head leaning up against the back of his neck.

"What a day," Gordon could feel the vibration of her voice on his back. "It's awfully nice to see you." Gordon smiled and turned, kissing her forehead and brushing her strawberry blond hair away from her face. Gordon could see David from the corner of his eye, reaching into his pocket and redirecting his attention to his cell phone. "Sit Holly please, relax. Dinner will be out momentarily."

Holly sat at the head of the table and stretched out her arms and placed her hand on David's wrist, causing her son to pull away and continue tapping away at the phone's keys. "How was school today Dave? Anything new and exciting?"

"Same shit, different day." David said, his eyes still lowered towards the phone's screen.

"David," Holly said, readjusting herself in her seat. "Language."

Standing at the stove, Gordon scooped the charred remains of chicken from the pan and shoveled three portions onto their plates, burnt side down. He accompanied the meat with two scoops of white beans and steamed carrots, thick, soggy, and overcooked. After nearly tripping on Pearl, Gordon set the plates down in front of Holly and David. The three folded their hands and gave thanks, David prematurely picking at a burnt end of chicken.

"Funny story today," Holly said, breaking the silence." An older woman came into the bank today and asked if she could exchange her coins for bills." Holly pulled the napkin from underneath her silverware and laid it across her lap. "With both hands she picked up her purse and dumped the contents onto my desk, pennies, chap stick, sun glasses, everything. It must have taken us twenty minutes to count all those coins." Gordon chuckled, causing a smile to pull at the edges of Holly's mouth. To Holly, Gordon gave her stability. Not in a financial sense but his mere presence had a calming affect on her nerves, mellowing her to a gentle simmer.

Holly reached out and poured herself a glass of wine, topping off Gordon's class as well before she placed the bottle back to the center of the table. "Oh Gordy, I almost forgot," Holly said in between sips. "How'd today go with Max?"

"Oh right, yea, well it's still to be determined, nothing definite just yet." Gordon said, a heaping wad of carrots and beans pocketed in his cheeks.

"What do you mean to be determined?" Holly said, setting her fork down across the plate.

"I mean that it might not happen. But, I came away with a positive feeling if that means anything."

"You need this job Gordon. Max told me it was a done deal; the interview was merely a formality. What are you going to do for work?" You need something."

"My severance from the driving academy runs through the end of the year. I'll be okay, I'll find something. I think." Gordon found it difficult to sustain eye contact with Holly; he looked down at Pearl whose eyes were already locked onto him. Pearl's eyes shooting off in opposite directions, her under bite exposing a set of tiny jagged, vicious teeth.

"That's it." Holly picked the napkin off of her lap in a fist and pushed chair away from the table. "He told me explicitly that he could find something for you. I'm going down to Max's and give him a piece of my mind."

"Going down where? To his office?" Gordon pulled his sleeve back and checked his watch, "It's 8:00pm, he's not at the office and even if he was I wouldn't want to make a big deal of this. Holly, I'll find something else, it'd be uncomfortable asking for a favor from your ex husband."

"Gordon, Max lives down the street. He moved there after the divorce. It was easier on everyone, and plus I think I made out well in the asset allocation because the move was so easy on him. But this, he gave me his word. It would be great to show up at his doorstep and tell him how I really feel."

Gordon had lost his appetite. He wasn't sure if the overcooked meal contributed to the sick feeling in his stomach. "When were you planning on telling me that you lived on that you and Max lived on the same street?"

"I didn't think it was such a big production." Holly pulled herself back towards the table and began picking at a stack of carrots, inadvertently knocking one down off the plate, sending it rolling off the table and onto the kitchen floor. Pearl immediately lowered her nose to the carrot and crunched the orange cube in her mouth. "It certainly makes it easier on David. It's important that he still spends time with Max." David's eyes picked up from his phone for the first time, nodded his head at his mother and went back to his phone underneath the table, occasionally lifting a forkful of chicken towards his mouth.

"You don't see how this could be uncomfortable for me Holly?" Gordon felt a warm wetness running down his pant leg, saturating his sock. Pearl's back leg's hovering above Gordon's foot. "God dammit Pearl!" He shook the dog off of his shoe, giving the dog an extra jolt out from under the table.

"Oh would you look at that." Holly said, her voice trailing with surprise and flattery rather than disapproval. She tilted in her seat so to see the puddle left behind where Gordon once laid his feet. "I think she needs to go out, would you mind taking her out Gordy?"

Gordon opened up his briefcase and pulled out a stack of week old newspapers, dropping them on to the puddle. He reached down and scooped up the dog, cradling the underside of its wet fur and pulled the leash from the drawer and walked towards the front door. Gordon worked at fastening the leash to the loop in Pearl's collar but the dog failed to relinquish its bite on Gordon's finger.

Outside, the suburban neighborhood looked bright and inviting. An array of orange and red leaves illuminating in the street lights blew softly over Gordon's head as he and Pearl made their way down the street, Pearl sniffing at every crack in the sidewalk. Pearl stopped at the site of a cigarette-but, the leash tightening as Gordon continued to walk. Pearl began chewing on the but, Gordon considered pulling the trash from the dog's mouth but instead adjusted the belt around his waist and waited for Pearl to finish chewing. Behind them the thumping bass of a passing car came closer. Not wanting to be associated with the pint-sized dog, Gordon stood close to a blue Toyota parked alongside the curb and lowered the leash to his waist. The car passed slowly, thick and heavy thuds emanating from its stereo as the car's silver rims and lowered suspension rolled past. Two figures inside the vehicle giving long, drawn out gazes at Gordon.

Pearl sniffed intensely at the tire of the Toyota, Gordon jerking the leash towards him. " eep it moving Pearl. Not just yet Girl."

At the end of the street Gordon stopped at a mailbox that read M. SUMMERS. The yards lawn thick and still a luscious green, perfectly manicured. Gordon tugged the dog onto the yard and stood still allowing Pearl to seek out a comfortable spot. Inside the large house Gordon could see a figure through a large vertical window pulling aside the curtains and walk towards the front door. Gordon heard the door clicking unlocked followed by a sweeping burst of light as the front door swung open, presenting Max Summers in gym shorts and a red zipper fleece. "You," Max pointed a stern finger through the darkness. "Get your rat off of my lawn!"

Gordon gave a blank stare back at Max as Pearl settled into a contented squat.

“Hey buddy, no hablo? Get the fuck off my lawn.” Max pulled his reading glasses off of her face.

Gordon thought Max looked vulnerable without his suite and tie. “Gordon? What the hell, that you? Listen man, you better have a bag to pick that up with. You’re not leaving that in my yard.” A police siren sounded in the background, reminding Gordon of his encounter with the city’s highway police. “You’ve got an entire neighborhood to let that dog do its business. Why choose my yard, the nicest on block, out of all the spots to let your dog defile?”

“Why this yard? Well Max, have you ever gone hunting?”

Wristcutters: A Love Story.

Colleen Mason

Hold on, it's not what you think.

It's not about the act of suicide. It's about finding love.

Let me talk about indie films before we get into "Wristcutters" (2006). Indie films are these wonderful things that are made for a nickel with the potential to make millions. Indies color outside the lines "Harold and Maude" toys with romances of the soul that exist outside the boundaries of age, "TiMER" shows us a world where someone can predict the exact moment their true love will simply walk into their life a traumatizing thought if the love of your life won't meet you for fifty years. These movies star actors as equally skilled as those featured in the headlines, but never get taken to the prom by Disney or Castle Rock Entertainment. Straight to TV or DVD production kills these edgy films that have so much to offer.

Now back to "Wristcutters."

Meet *ia* (Patrick Fugit), he's a boy, and he's dead. He finds himself at the way-station of the afterlife after a traumatic break up. A place reserved specially for suicides. *ia* finds that the afterlife is not much better than the real world; colors are bland, no one can smile and there are no flowers or stars, and yeah, you still have to work. His fellow suicides, including best friend Eugene (Shea Whigham), waste their lives away working mundane jobs and drinking away the night. The tone of this place is characterized by a bored *ia*, who says one night "I'm not going out tonight. It just makes me depressed." And Eugene replies wonderfully, "so what you gonna do? ill yourself?"

See it's funny, because they are already dead.

After a while, *ia* hears that his ex-girlfriend Desiree (Leslie Bibb) has recently committed suicide. Following his strong desire to be reunited with the girl that broke his heart, *ia* persuades Eugene to help him find her. They pick up a hitchhiker, Mikal (Shannon Sossamon), a girl, also dead, who insists that her being there is a mistake and that she wants to see the People In Charge aka the P.I.C. so she can get back to real life. Mikal's character is beautifully defined by this quote: "Who the hell likes being stuck in a place where you can't even smile? It's hot as balls, everybody's an asshole. I just wanna go home."

The trio travels down the highway in Eugene's beat up car. Under the seat is a black hole where anything that gets dropped on the floor just disappears. It's that place in everyone's car where favorite sunglasses get lost and where all lost change falls.

ia learns from another hitchhiker, *neller* (Tom Waits), that miracles are possible people have the ability to make objects float or change color. The key is to not care about it. While Mikal is able to make miracles happen, *ia* becomes obsessed with his constant failures.

Eventually they hear about "Messiah *ing*," a leader of a cult who promises to make a real miracle happen separating his soul from his body. *ia* finds that his ex, Desiree, is working with *ing*. They talk. In a public performance *ing* attempts to kill himself again as a public miracle which happens right when the P.I.C. decides to raid the party.

Long story short, Mikal leaves with the P.I.C. and gets sent back to life while *ia* sits around waiting for her in a lonely panic. In a desperate move to get back to Mikal he forces himself through the black hole under the seat of Eugene's car. He wakes up and finds himself in the hospital next to Mikal. Returned to the world of the living.

This is a weird romantic comedy. Unlike more mainstream films "Wristcutters" actually has more than just comedic failure and weird coincidences that bring the main characters together.

This movie is really weird. Like there are objects levitating and all the characters are dead. But it doesn't feature a klutzy protagonist tripping his or her way through the movie in a wild romantic romp. What I love about this movie is that it's Mikal that makes it all happen. She has a goal to get back to life. If she wasn't there, there would be no movie. No conflict. No push to do something, to fix a mistake. Mikal and *ia* are looking for different things, but find that they work well together. *ia* (dead boy), follows Mikal's (dead girl) trail trying to find his ex-girlfriend but ends up falling in love with. Go figure.

What makes these indie movies stand out is that the main characters don't have to play dumb or rely on slapstick humor to get the girl (or guy). Characters are drawn to each other by intelligence or circumstance, and stay together because of mutual goals or attraction. They're more realistic and relatable when they fail it's a real event that destroys them totally. These characters have not only contemplated killing themselves, but in some cases they have already done it. So as members of the audience we are asked: who hasn't been depressed after a break up? Who hasn't contemplated suicide after life changes for the worst? Who hasn't thought of spilling blood in the bath tub at least once? But in the end, even though Mia has lost Mikal (she has left with the P.I.C. for places unknown), he breaks out of his character's normal sit around attitude and chases her. He stops thinking and does what he needs to do.

It's refreshing to see movies where the story is not about stupid characters. Look at that movie "Knocked Up" (2007) starring Seth Rogen and Katherine Heigl. Romantic comedies like this one rely on one person either acting childish or trying to dupe someone. True, these movies show that the immature guy eventually grows up and becomes capable of being in a mature relationship, but the audience always has to suffer through the boy's stupidity first. Meanwhile the girl is clueless to the guy's advances (or if you look at "Fifty First Dates" the girl can't even remember who the guy is). These movies scream that guys are immature and girls are dumb or won't be interested until the guy proves himself.

So let's look at "Fifty First Dates" (2004). First of all, you get a scumbag played by Adam Sandler marking this pretty girl, Drew Barrymore, to seduce and then ditch. The movie makes a point of illustrating Sandler's womanizing ways. When she daily rejects him Sandler's character gets drawn in and cannot resist this pretty girl who just says "no" over and over. Then we find out this girl lives the same day every day because she has a brain injury and has no long term memory. This movie follows the typical rom-com plotline; Ohhh I think I like you and oh no, my heart is broken. Then the guy grows up and changes his ways. Now let's be together forevvver. Giving hope for every girl who wants to fall in love that the guys she sets her sights on will change himself when he realizes he's a scumbag. This movie ends with the heart-touching realization that Barrymore's character wakes up on a boat to find out that she has somehow produced a child and lives a completely different life from yesterday.

Enough of this white-bread message that "guys are dumb and have to be lead along to find love." Enough of this "women are targets for seduction." Let's move on to films that show reality that men and women are people, who have thoughts, who grow and change. Who fail sometimes, but pick themselves up. Even if they're dead.

don't sleep
Kelley Bligh

I don't want to sleep
Just to buy more time
With you
Before our days
Pass
And our past
Disappears
Becomes completely obsolete
Stay up all night
With me
Just you and me
Don't sleep
And I won't even blink
Don't dare let these moments
Fade away in the dark
Unacknowledged in our unconscious
 iss me with your eyes open
Don't close them for one second
I'll stay awake all night
I'll stay awake every night
Just to steal more time with you

Forgotten Memories

Brianna Vitolo

I sat and stared at the photograph clutched between gnarled and wrinkled fingers, the figures in the picture bundled up in their winter gear. It felt like only yesterday that I had entered that old forgotten house. It's close to the summit of a long, forgotten mountain. The snow covered everything from the ground to the tips of the trees like a fairytale world of ice and undisturbed beauty. We marred that beauty with our snowmobiles, but we did notice its beauty first. Maybe that's how we escaped. Many were not so lucky. We had gotten too cold and had entered the house to get warm. There was wood stacked neatly on the porch. I was twenty-seven. "Grandma! It's time for dinner!" I lifted my head to see a girl of thirteen in the doorway waving me into the dining room. I was inside the house for only ten minutes. Where did the time go?

FAMILY BONDING

Lindsay Seppala

CHARACTERS

TINA- in her late forties. She's a mother (of Pete and Lilly) who tries to emphasize family life. The entire time she is on edge, frustrated with her children's' ignorance with everything around them and where they have, as a family, ended up. She wants them to be close and tight knit, but finds them drifting apart. She's confused with how they've ended up this way. Also, Tina stresses their responsibility with handling their own lives, especially Pete.

PETE- about nineteen. He's in college and ever since he's gotten his car he's always in and out of the house. He never is truly home to spend time with his family. He's messed up big time, and he's hiding all little secrets that go with that as the play goes on. Yet he has a self confidence in himself that he can make it through everything, even though he also has some ignorance regarding how difficult everything will become.

LILLY- about seventeen. She started growing away from her family as Pete was never around. Her moods tend to differ, as one day she may be happy or about to kill someone. At first she never pays attention to the family, and regards her life and friends to be more important than them and really takes them for granted. However when things get complicated she really changes her attitude to focus on the family.

DOTTIE- about nineteen. Pete's girlfriend and is eight months pregnant with his child. She's very optimistic about the pregnancy and wants his family to be a part of Dottie, Pete's and the baby's lives. She's very nice and encouraging toward Pete especially.

SETTING

An average kitchen, with the most of the activity at the kitchen table. There is a cordless phone sitting in the center of the table. There are three chairs around the table, and it is set for dinner. A stove is on the back wall with a few pots on top, and right next to it there is a door. Far stage left there is a stool out of the kitchen- in front of the curtain. Stage right there's a bed set up, with a night stand on each side and stuffed animals sitting on the bed. The stage right nightstand has a laptop, the stage left nightstand has a lamp and a phone.

Scene 1

A single spot light comes up on Pete sitting in the stool. The stage lights are dim on the center of the stage where the kitchen is set.

PETE: (To Audience.) Hi... so, I guess the best way to do this is to just come out and say it. I'm Pete and I've made a huge mistake. I'm not so good at admitting that though... so, I'm going to show you. I'll take you back to when I lost control of it, and when everything felt like it started to fall down around me. Okay, I'm being a little over dramatic, but still... this is all a really big deal to me...

(Pete exits and the lights come up on center stage. Tina is standing cooking and Lilly is sitting at the table texting.)

TINA: (Frustrated.) Can you put that thing down for two seconds and have a real conversation with me?

LILLY: Sure... sure... let me just send this last text...

TINA: Lilly, away!

(Lilly puts her phone down next to her plate and stands up.)

LILLY: What's for dinner tonight?

TINA: Pasta with red sauce... where's your brother?

LILLY: I don't know... maybe I should text him?

TINA: Don't be smart with me Lilly. He'll be home soon. I'm sure he will.

LILLY: He's never home mom, you always give him the benefit of the doubt... (Frustrated.) Well, how was your day mom?

TINA: It was okay... I just.... it was long. That's all.

LILLY: Well, what did you do all day?

TINA: (Less frustrated.) I cooked, I cleaned and I cared. I spoke to Grandma today.

LILLY: That's nice.

TINA: Yeah, well she's confused, and she's scared. You know, just like when Grandpa passed, except she never really got better. She's only getting worse. You should go spend some time with her.

LILLY: Yeah... maybe this weekend?

TINA: I was thinking tonight.

LILLY: She can wait for me to see her during the weekend mom. I can't just drop my night to go see Grandma.

TINA: Where's your brother?

LILLY: Jesus mom I don't know! He missed everything! (Slyly.) Let me text him?

TINA: No. I'll call him.

(Tina picks up the cordless phone and dials a number. They sit in silence. After a few seconds she puts the phone down.)

TINA: Rang twice and went to voicemail...

LILLY: So he pressed ignore?

TINA: (Nervous and hurt.) Let's hope not... did he mention what he was doing tonight?

LILLY: No, I barely see him anymore let alone speak to him. How would I know?

TINA: I don't like this... He really needs to get his act together and spend more time with us. He missed making bread, he's missing dinner... What has gotten into that boy? What does he think we're going to be around forever? You'd think he's learned that it's not possible...

(A beat.)

LILLY: Can I eat now?

TINA: No dear, let's wait for him.

LILLY: (Angry.) We sit here and wait for him every night! We never know whether he'll be here or he won't. How long are we going to wait?

TINA: However long it takes him to get here, I'm not letting him miss another family dinner.

LILLY: (Bitter.) I'm getting tired of this.

TINA: (Flat toned.) I'm sorry to hear that.

LILLY: Can I at least go watch TV?

TINA: (Sarcastic.) I have a better idea, how about you sit here and talk to me? How was your day?

LILLY: (Unhappy.) It was nothing interesting. Went to school and came home.

TINA: Are you excited for prom? I saw some dresses out when I drove past a dress shop today! I was thinking we can go dress shopping together!

LILLY: It's okay. I might not go. A couple of us might skip out and do something else.

TINA: Oh... okay...

(Awkward pause. The mom nervously starts serving pasta to the three plates. Pete walks in the door and drops his book bag. He sits down as fast as possible. He knows they've been looking for him.)

PETE: Yum, Pasta! Smells great mom!

TINA: Where have you been?

PETE: I was at, uh... um...

LILLY: (Sarcastic.) That's not suspicious.

PETE: (Ignoring it.) How was your day princess?

LILLY: It was, you know, same old.

PETE: How's senior year treating ya?

LILLY: It's, nothing. Like every other year so far

PETE: Pass the sauce?

(Lilly passes the sauce.)

TINA: Pete, where were you?

PETE: I was at a friend's house mom. Relax!

TINA: You ignored my phone call. We've been waiting for you. I was worried.

PETE: I was driving; you really want me to answer the phone when I'm driving?

TINA: Well next time if you're going to be late for dinner please text me or something.

LILLY: Now you like texting?!

TINA: (Pissed.) Stop young lady I don't need that right now!

PETE: (Worried.) Mom? What's wrong...?

TINA: (Back to normal.) Nothing... nothing... just had a long day.

PETE: Oh... sorry.

TINA: Pete, Lilly and I are going to visit Grandma tonight... would you like to come?

LILLY: (Frustrated.) Mom, for the last time I'm visiting her this weekend, not tonight! I don't have time. I have other things to do.

TINA: (Mad.) Like what young lady? What could you possibly have to do?

LILLY: (Makes up as she goes.) I have to pick out my clothes for tomorrow! Anne wants me to call her; she said she has something really important to tell me. That and I have to paint my toes and put my hair in curlers. It's already so late since we've been waiting for this jerk face over here to get to dinner.

TINA: (Hurt and angry.) So that's what you have to do tonight? All of that stuff is more important than visiting your grandmother? Your own family?

LILLY: I'm giving up the mall this weekend to go see her. I think that's enough.

PETE: Yeah, I can't go Mom. I'm busy tonight. I'm playing -box with the guys from school, I already promised I would. I can't go back on a promise. I'll go with Lilly this weekend. We can play Scrabble, it'll be fun since it won't be so close to her bedtime like it is now. She'll be awake and ready to focus on the game, on us.

TINA: When was the last time either of you saw her?

LILLY: I saw her a couple weekends ago, I brought her bread. Remember? She called me in the middle of my mall trip to ask me to drive all the way out there to bring her bread... She told me she wanted to eat it, like we all used to eat it together. She wanted me to bring her a loaf from home, since she knew you made them the day before, so she can show her friends how great it is. And then she fed the birds with it... a waste of a good loaf.

PETE: I saw her two Mondays ago when I brought her to get her medication. Remember?

TINA: How long did you guys stay?

LILLY: (Guiltily.) Twenty minutes...

PETE: I drove her around for an hour.

TINA: She and Grandpa practically helped me raise you guys when I lost your father... and you can't even give her the time of day now. Both of you, you're coming with me tonight.

LILLY: Mom! I can't!

TINA: Really? You really can't? You really can't skip out on a day of looking pretty to visit your grandmother? It's really not always about you, my dear!

(A beat.)

PETE: Mom... is grandma okay?

TINA: No, she's not. If either of you had spent any time with her in the past week you'd know she's been really sick, parts of her body are starting to get weaker. You would've asked me daily how she was doing, that is, if either of you cared. If either of you asked, you would've known she was admitted to the hospital today. If either of you had known that, you would've known her organs are on the risk of shutting down and she probably only has a few more days to live.

(The mom bursts out in a sob. The kids sit shocked. Pete and Lilly stand up. Lilly helps Tina up.)

PETE: Lilly, get yours and mom's coat. Let's go, I'll drive.

(Lilly exits momentarily. Pete hugs his mother apologetically. Lilly quickly returns with two coats. She hands one to her mother. They both put their coats on. Lilly goes to grab her phone, but after hesitation does not.)

LILLY: Hey mom... I'm sorry.

PETE: Yeah, me too.

TINA: Me three.

(They exit out the door. Black out.)

Scene 2

Pete comes out on his stool, a spot goes on him.

PETE: (To Audience.) We went to the hospital and the entire time I was kicking myself for being so stupid, for being a lousy family member, but they haven't seen the worst of how I royally suck as a part of any family. You see, when I was little, family was the only thing I had through tragedy after tragedy. Friends came and went but blood always stayed. They always were there to give me a hug, play baseball... bake bread. All those family traditions I really loved being a part of. We always helped each other and when I saw Grandma laying in that bed, well I started feeling horrible about what I've done...

(Lilly is asleep in the bed. Pete sits and watches from his stool. Lilly's phone is on her stage right nightstand. It goes off.)

LILLY: Ugh!

(Lilly readjusts. Pause. Her phone goes off again.)

Mnnn....

(Lilly readjusts. Pause. Her phone goes off again. She grabs the phone and checks it.)

A message from Pete... "Hey I'm sorry for not being around. I love you little sister."

(Lilly sits up and turns on her desk lamp. Stage lights come up to illuminate the room just enough. She shakes her head. Spot on Lilly. She speaks more to herself, her inner dialogue expressed for everyone to hear.)

"I love you little sister..." Does he even know what love is? How can he love me if he's always at school, working or at his friend's house? Does he love who we used to be together, or who I used to be? The little sister who would play Barbie while he played with his favorite matchbox car. Or does he love the middle school me who wanted to be just like her older brother and make mom proud. Maybe he loves the me who baked bread with him, Grandma and Grandpa. He can't love the current me though. The me who's in high school. Can he love high school me?

High school me... The current me... I'm not even sure I love high school me. I'd rather be the cute little girl with flour on her nose, and a teddy bear dragging on the ground in her one hand. If I could I would go back to those days in a heartbeat. The days when Dad was still around, and when Pete was home. When Mom wasn't so obsessed with keeping us all together, and when Grandma wasn't sick. When we would all get together and have holidays together. I wouldn't give it a second thought if someone asked me if I wanted to go back. If they could take me back...

Do I even love Pete? Sure he's my brother but he's never around either. I don't know the college him. It's pretty hard to say that I love the brother I don't see anymore. I mean, I liked the high school him but the college him... I really can't try to not dislike the college him... I mean, does blood really mean I have to automatically love him?

(She grabs her laptop. Opens it and starts click around.)

The best way to even get to know my brother is probably through his Facebook... hah... my brother... Oh... there's a girl on his page? Dottie...? I didn't even know he was talking to someone... he didn't tell me... Is she even pretty enough for him?

(Shocked.) Wait... what? This girl is pregnant- and she's leaving hearts on my brother's wall? Oh man has he really gotten himself mixed up with a pregnant girl? Oh man... I can't wait to bring this up! He's going to be so embarrassed. This is huge! What does he think he's going to be this baby's father or something? It's not even his!

Or... could it be? No, no... he wouldn't have done anything close to that. Mom's raised us better, we know to be careful... well I know- I mean, he should know. No... no way! He probably doesn't even like her. Just some girl who's obsessed with him. I mean, that's nothing new for Pete anyway.

(Lilly opens her phone and texts.)

“Don’t be sorry big bro. I love you too.” And send... I’ll just talk to him tomorrow. It’s going to be something stupid anyway. Nothing to get all worked up about...

(Stops texting and lays down. Lilly puts her phone down. She turns off the desk lamp. Spot off Lilly. Spot on Pete.)

PETE: (To Audience. As he’s talking he gets up and walks over to the kitchen. Spot goes off and lights go up on the kitchen center stage.) So... there’s a problem. Lilly had an idea about what was going on, and I wasn’t ready for that. I had no idea she was going to have any clue on the situation. I knew I had to tell them... but push comes to shove I really was just not ready to face the facts... I mean my family was going to be so pissed when they found out. (Glances at the clock on the stove.) Oh... look at the time... I better get to bed. I have a big day ahead of me tomorrow. Tomorrow’s the day it all goes wrong.

(Blackout.)

Scene

The curtains close to hide the kitchen and a hospital waiting room comprised of a couple chairs and a small table with magazines are brought on. Lights come up on Lilly and Pete sitting in silence in two of the chairs waiting. Both of them at first silent. Pete moves uncomfortably and opens his mouth to say something to Lilly. She doesn’t notice. He closes his mouth and goes back to sitting in silence. A few seconds pass by, and he tries again.

PETE: I’m sorry... for everything.

LILLY: Don’t be sorry, you didn’t do anything wrong...

PETE: Well... uh...

LILLY: What?

PETE: I have a girlfriend- I want you to meet her!

LILLY: (Suspicious.) Oh... really?

PETE: (Catching her strange reaction.) Yeah...? Her name’s Dottie, I’ve been with her for a while.

LILLY: Oh... Dottie? The one that posts on your wall? The... pregnant one?

(Lilly freezes and Pete stands up and walks forward to talk to the audience.)

PETE: Right... so this was my moment. To stand up and tell them about what I had done. About the accident I had caused. To face the facts and own up to my mistakes. Would my own sister understand it though? Then telling mom, and grandma? I guess I’d have to take it as it comes...

(Pete returns to his original spot and pose for when Lilly froze.)

PETE: Oh... how’d you find out?

LILLY: How does anyone find out anything anymore? Through Facebook... Did you really think dating a pregnant girl was the smartest idea?

PETE: (Defensive.) She wasn't always pregnant you know... she's really a great girl. You shouldn't judge her based on-

LILLY: (Angry.) She cheated on you? And you're still with her? How stupid can you be Pete? I thought you were smarter than this! She has no morals!

PETE: (Through his teeth.) It's my baby...

LILLY: (Shocked.) Wha... what? Are you serious?

PETE: I promise that it's my baby... I've been seeing Dottie for a while, and only a few months after I started seeing her I... accidentally got her pregnant.

LILLY: (Loss of words.) Are you kidding me?

PETE: I wish I was...

LILLY: Pete... I'm really sorry.

PETE: Me too.

LILLY: So, she looked like she was pretty far along...

PETE: Well, yeah... she's eight months...

LILLY: (Gradually getting angry again.) Wait a minute... eight months?! You knocked up your girlfriend, that we never met, eight months ago and waited this long to tell us about it? Are you kidding me Pete?! How could you do this to us? To me? To Mom? To Grandma? What made you think not telling us was going to be the best thing? This is freaking fantastic! Eight months! I'm going to be the aunt of a baby whose mother I don't even know? Why didn't you just wait for the baby to be born to tell us for crying out loud? (Starting to cry.) Why didn't you tell me...?

(Pete pulls Lilly in for an awkward hug. She doesn't hug back.)

PETE: I'm really sorry... I truly am... I was just so lost and before I knew it time got away from me. If I could go back and change it I would, but I can't-

LILLY: (Pushes out of his hug and slowly stops crying as she gets angrier.) You think apologizing and giving me a hug is going to make this right? There are no words to describe what I'm feeling right now- and when you tell mom this is going to put a hole in her heart! And Grandma... oh forget about it! You'll kill her!

PETE: If anyone can handle this out of the three of you it's Grandma.

LILLY: The Grandma who's laying in there sick on a hospital bed? I'd rethink telling her anything about that baby of yours Pete.

PETE: Her name is Maybelle... she's a girl and we're calling her Maybelle. Belle for short...

LILLY: Great! Great! The little baby has a name! That's fantastic! The eight month baby I just found out about has also already been named! That's cool Pete, real cool. Thanks for being a part of the family bro, and for sharing your little "miracle" with us.

PETE: Lilly... I'm not telling you this stuff to make you angry. I know I messed up, but I really need you to help support me with this.

LILLY: Support the brother I barely see anymore who comes out and tells me he has a baby on the way? Yeah, that's going to happen. That's like investing in a business that has no plan.

PETE: (Trying to remain calm but getting angry.) How do you know I have no plan?

LILLY: Well you knocked up your girlfriend. Was that part of your plan smart-ass?

PETE: Listen... (Trying to keep his cool.) I'm working, going to school, and taking care of my girlfriend... I'm doing the best I can on my own and it's getting hard. (Getting angry.) Now if you and mom will be there for me that's great, but if not I'll find a way to take care of everything on my own. So pick a side and stick with it sis.

(Long pause.)

LILLY: (Shakes her head. Apologetic.) I'm sorry, I really am. I'm just really hurt Pete, please understand that. You're asking me to accept something that I thought was impossible to happen to you, to us. I thought you wouldn't let that happen, and if she was pregnant with your baby I thought you would've told us by now. I'll babysit and help you out, but you can never keep anything like this from us again...

PETE: Thank you Lilly... I won't keep this from you again, and I'm really sorry I hurt you... I don't know what I was thinking. I mean, I guess I wasn't. I was trying to get through the day, get to see Dottie and then rush home to see a glimpse of you guys before you went to bed. I felt like I never had time to do anything so the most important thing got pushed off until Grandma getting sick reminded me of how much I need to keep you guys in my life. I hope you can forgive me Lil-

LILLY: (Still angry.) I'll be there for you, of course... but don't think that you're getting off the hook easily. I'm still kind of mad, and I really am hurt. You've betrayed my trust, and don't expect forgiveness so quickly. Not from me, mom or grandma.

PETE: (Soft.) I don't know that I'm going to tell Grandma...

LILLY: Are you kidding me? Um... Grandma practically raised us, I think you need to tell her.

PETE: An old fashioned woman like her might near have a heart attack or die from shame if I tell her... I don't want to kill her.

(Beat.)

LILLY: When I said that before... I didn't mean that you'd literally kill her... no offence but duh- she wouldn't get so mad. She might even be happy. (Lightens up.) She'd get to meet her great grandchild.

(Tina enters and waits to hear their conversation. Lilly and Pete don't know she is there.)

LILLY: Maybe that'd be some extra inspiration to fight whatever's trying to take her down. She's strong, you could give her a reason to live.

PETE: You think so?

LILLY: Yeah... I mean, we were always her inspiration... but maybe now it's time for her to find a new will to live. I'd clear it with mom first.

PETE: Mom...

(When Tina speaks it alarms both of them. After she doesn't say anything about a baby, they calm down a little.)

TINA: (Optimistic but onto them.) That's me! Well you two still are her inspiration... you guys want to come see her? She's been asking about you both.

LILLY: I'll go in, Mom I think Pete needs to tell you something. (Pats Pete on the back.) Good luck bro.

(Lilly stands and exits. Tina walks closer to him. She notices he's upset and sits.)

TINA: Pete? Hun... what's wrong?

PETE: (Hesitantly. Afraid.) Well... I... uh.... Wanted to apologize for never being home and wanted to explain myself.

TINA: Oh you can explain yourself after. Let's go see Grandma.

PETE: No, it's not that easy...

(Pete gestures to the seat next to him. Tina sits.)

PETE: (Says quickly to explain everything before she can interject.) Mom, I'm having a daughter named Maybelle. Belle for short... My girlfriend's name is Dottie and she can't wait to meet you guys. And I'm sorry I waited so long to tell you, and I'm sorry I'm telling you now but you need to know. You need to know you're going to be a grandmother, and that I'm sorry I've been hiding it from you. I've been spending all my time with her and I've been trying to make money when I can to support her and the baby when Belle's born. Between that, going to school and seeing you guys I never have time for anything anymore. Please don't freak out, I've been trying to handle this the absolute best way I could. I've been trying to do whatever would be helpful so that in the end everything would be okay when Belle came into our lives, and I didn't mean to stop showing up to dinner, or coming home late. I didn't mean to slowly start fading out of family life and becoming just a son who you never see. I'm just trying to make as much money as I can before I want to spend all my time with my daughter... So I can be a family man. So I can have a house with Dottie, marry her and raise our daughter along my Dottie's side. So I can teach our daughter what it's like to be in a good family and be there in the good and the bad. I want to protect her from everything, and I want to pass on all of our family traditions. Mom, I want to teach her how to make bread so the family tradition lives on! And I'm sorry this is going to be hard on you, and I'm sorry this is a lot to take in right now in a bad situation. But all I'm asking of you is to be there for me and Dottie and to be as supportive of Belle as you are of me. Please mom...

TINA: Wow... when I woke up this morning I did not expect this. (Confused.) How long has this been going on?

PETE: (Cautiously.) I've been seeing Dottie for almost eleven months... and Belle's due in less than a month...

TINA: (Shocked and angry.) She's eight months pregnant! Pete I can't believe this would happen? I can't believe you could've done such a thing... (Starts crying.)

PETE: (Scared.) Mom?

TINA: (Anger growing, still crying though.) Pete, this is not how I raised you! I raised you to be a gentleman and this is what you do to show me that you're all grown up? You knock up some girl! You have a lot of explaining to do. I can't believe you-

PETE: Mom I-

TINA: (Nearly screaming.) Have screwed everything up? Yes you have!

(Tina freezes and the lights fade out.)

Scene 4

A spot comes up on Pete and he walks over to his stool. He sits and shakes his head. The set in the dark behind him has the waiting room removed and the kitchen is revealed. The kitchen is a mess, someone had been busily making something.

PETE: (To Audience.) Why did I keep the secret? Well... I guess I've always been the kid who thought problems would go away. A mess, like a baby, would always clean itself up. Mom always cleaned up after me, as did Grandma. Lilly would cover for me now and then. So I guess... I thought if I kept it to myself and just waited for my mess to be cleaned up, no one would say anything or have any problems. Only this mess didn't go away...

I knew that when I told them Mom would be upset... I wasn't raised this way. I was raised to hold doors open for women, and to push their chair in behind them. As my mom said, I was raised to be a gentleman. Which I knew that... so I guess that's why I waited so long. Now I have no choice, and I'm just going to let the pieces fall where they will. Those who want to support me will... and those who don't, well they don't have to.

Mom's never been more disappointed in me. We decided to discuss me telling grandma about Belle in the morning. I think mom was more afraid about making the wrong choice than I was. I mean, I guess I had already made some poor decisions so picking the wrong thing was nothing new to me...

(As he speaks Pete gets up and moves into the kitchen. Lights come up on the kitchen. It is messy and has different bowls, ingredients and utensils out. He continues speaking to the audience from there.)

PETE:

So we saw Grandma and we left when visiting hours were over. She was doing okay, I think. That woman was always much stronger than you would think someone her age would be. Usually when you see a little old woman you think frail, but when I see my Grandma I think of all the times she's helped my sister and me through so many rough situations when we had no idea she was going through things a million times worse. Well that's my Grammy I guess.

When I was little I used to go to Grandma's and help her clean up the kitchen. She'd give me a little paper towel to clean one spot while she really cleaned everything else. I always loved thinking that I was being a man and helping Grandma out. Lilly didn't start coming until she was around three, and then Grandpa started asking me to come help him work on his antique car. By help, I mean he'd have me look at it and tell him what I thought of all the work he had done in the past week. Then Grandma would call us both upstairs and I'd run. Oh boy would I run up those stairs. I waited every week to go to Grandma and Grandpa's to help with this one thing. It was such a tradition.

Grandma would have everything set up and both Grandma and Grandpa would get a bowl and either Lilly or I. Sometimes I worked with Grandma, other times with Grandpa. In the bowl we'd toss all the ingredients in and then came my favorite part, we'd get to mix with our hands. We got to sit down and just go. We could make a mess, get flour everywhere, and Grandma never really yelled. She'd laugh and she and Grandpa would throw flour at each other. We did it every weekend with the same family recipe. Then when we were done Grandma would cook it in the brick oven outside. It would finish cooking and we'd always sit and eat it with butter. I remember looking down at it and thinking, "I made this bread. I made this dinner." It was such a great feeling...

My dad and mom would come over later and eat what we had all made together. We'd all have bread and butter, and just sit around and talk. I always sat with my dad and tried to be a man like him. I really tried too. Grandpa would always try to ask me questions that would be easy for me to answer and made me sound smart in front of everyone.

Well, then my dad died and my entire world seemed to come crashing down. I was only 8 years old, and Lilly was only 6. She was too young to really understand what had happened except for the fact that Daddy wasn't coming back. Me, well I'm not ashamed to say I cried a lot. But then Grandma suggested something that made my mom, Lilly and I have an easier time. She asked if we would like to make bread twice a week. Of course we said yes! Grandma would have us sleepover on Friday and Saturday night. Mom would even sleepover too... It was always fun and it really helped Lilly and I keep our spirits up. We'd play games every Friday night, make bread during the day on Saturday, and then Sunday we'd go to church and pray for daddy. Grandma always held my hand when I remembered he was gone. Each weekend was filled with hope and humor. Hope that Dad was happy in heaven, and laughter to try and get us all uplifted to make it through another week.

When Grandpa died I only saw Grandma cry twice. She was heartbroken, but she never showed Lilly and I. I was about eleven when he died, and after school I started going to Grandma's house. Mom was working, so Grandma was in charge of us. When we were in different schools I always got home before Lilly... she hated it. We would watch TV, do my homework, and got Lilly off the bus. Mom would come home around dinner and Grandma would already have dinner done. She would make pasta, meatloaf, hamburgers, grilled chicke, hotdogs, and all good stuff. But all I really wanted was our weekend bread.

I didn't tell Grandma about Dottie or Belle yet. I'm not sure I entirely want to. There is something I am sure of though. This weekend I'm going to have Dottie come here and make bread with me- Grandma's recipe. We'll make it just the way Grandma and I used to. When I get my own house, I'll buy a brick oven to cook our own bread. I'll make it every weekend with Lilly, my Mom, Dottie and Belle. We'll continue our family tradition. It'll bring us all a lot closer together. Yeah, it'll be fun.

I still know the recipe... I've memorized it. Mom memorized it. Lilly memorized it. Dottie and Belle will memorize it. We'll all make bread as a family. If Grandma makes it, she'll lead us all and can even give Belle a paper towel so she can clean the counters. When I have a son I'll show him the car I watched Grandpa bring back to life, and he and I can keep it alive in his memory too...

(The timer goes off.)

Oh, I better get that. I made some bread for Grandma, her special recipe. It's not cooked in an outdoor brick oven, but hopefully it'll do.

(He takes bread out of the oven. He looks at the clock on the stove.)

Wow, it's pretty late. No wonder why I haven't heard a peep out of Mom or Lilly. I better get to bed; I've got work in the morning, a Grandma to visit and bread to deliver.

(Exits stage. Black out.)

Scene 5

The lights come up on the kitchen. It is a mess from Pete baking his bread, everything is still out. Tina enters.

TINA: (Shouting offstage in the direction of the kid's rooms.) Get over here! Both of you!

(Lilly enters looking extremely tired.)

LILLY: What's up Mom?

TINA: Can you explain this mess dear?

LILLY: Nope... not my handy work.

TINA: Pete always did leave a mess behind him everywhere. That boy needs to learn more responsibility. Especially now...

LILLY: Where is he anyway?

TINA: I don't know... (Shouts back toward the rooms.) Pete? Pete? (Louder.) Pete?!

LILLY: I'll go check...

TINA: Thanks.

(Lilly exits. Tina starts cleaning up the mess.)

TINA: (To Audience.) How does that boy expect to be a father with this lack of responsibility? He's here one moment and disappears the next. That boy needs parenting lessons, that's for sure. Or, at least a lesson in how to be a devoted family member... his family values seem to be decreasing fast. You aren't home anymore, you aren't around to make sure we're okay... Then to make this mess and just leave... he's hardly a role model for his own sister and now he's got to become one for his child... Oh Pete... you and I both know your father would not be proud...

(Tina realizes she's cleaning and starts to make more of a mess for Pete to clean up.)

TINA: That boy needs to learn that he shouldn't leave messes around and expect someone else to just fix and clean it up!

(Lilly enters. When Tina notices Lilly she stops making more of a mess. Lilly awkwardly speaks.)

LILLY: He's not in his room... and his keys are gone. He's not home mom. You ok?

TINA: I'm fine... I'm fine...Great... so much for my plans of eating breakfast than going to see Grandma. It's already 11... I mean, it's bad enough that you slept in but now he's gone!

LILLY: Should I call him?

TINA: No it's okay. Let's get ready and eat, we'll see if he shows up.

LILLY: I can be ready in two seconds, I showered last night.

TINA: Okay, go get ready? I'll make some oatmeal. Leave the mess exactly as it is though, you're brother's going to clean this up.

LILLY: Wait... ew really mom, oatmeal?

TINA: (Jokingly.) With that attitude you'll be lucky if it's the good oatmeal.

LILLY: Okay, I'll be right back.

(Lilly exits.)

TINA: (To Audience.) Maybe I should call him? I mean, to make sure he's okay? No... he's going to be a daddy soon... he's okay. He can handle himself, he's a grown up. Pete... I'm still wondering if I need to do more to help you. This is so new to me, and I guess even though I knew you've been disappearing a lot, now that I know what's going on it hurts me even more when you're not here... am I a jealous mom? Who just wants you to be her mama's boy? I guess so... At least Lilly has started to shape up and care about her family, I guess that's the only miracle that happened from all this. She actually takes the time to talk to me now... (Takes her cell phone out of her pocket.) One call? If he doesn't answer after three rings he's busy? No... he's got things to do. Have I raised him right? Am I the one making bad decisions that are affecting him..? Am I a good mom?

LILLY: (Offstage.) Just got a text from Pete! He's on his way home to meet us and to go see Grandma. Is breakfast almost ready?

TINA: (Shouts offstage.) Yeah! We're having cereal! Eat whenever you're ready.

LILLY: (Offstage.) I'll be down in a second mom!

TINA: (Speaks to the audience.) I'm still wondering if I'm doing the best things for my kids. If I've been able to raise them right all these years. If I've given them too many freedoms or been too hard on them. Have I been the one messing up our family? Did I not instill enough family values in them? Oh... it's almost 11: 0... I need to get ready.

(Tina exits. Pause. Pete enters.)

PETE: (Shouts upstairs.) Hey sorry mom! I'm ready when you are. (Goes in a cabinet and pulls out a wrapped loaf of bread- the one he baked last night.)

(Lilly enters. She's very bitter toward him.)

LILLY: Where the hell were you?

PETE: (Defensive.) I was at work. I had the morning shift from six to eleven. I was covering for someone.

LILLY: Covering for someone?

PETE: Yeah I need all the money I can get. You know how expensive diapers are?

LILLY: You know how much you hurt mom. I know she's trying to stay calm and think she's the perfect mom but her world is spinning.

PETE: (Angry.) You don't think mine is?

LILLY: Grandma's sick. Her son has a baby on the way. We've never even met Dottie. How can you just wait to tell us this all and block us from everything?

PETE: So I made some bad decisions, so what? I don't think Mom can possibly be that hurt!

LILLY: (Softly.) She's questioning herself. You're never home, you got a girl pregnant...

She hasn't told me, but I can tell she thinks she did something wrong that brought you to this point.

PETE: (Confused.) Something wrong?

(Tina enters.)

LILLY: Never mind...

TINA: (Angry.) Pete, did you make this mess?

PETE: Uh... yeah I did.

TINA: So... start cleaning up? I don't have time to take care of you. You're going to have a thousand responsibilities soon and none will be as bad as cleaning but you might as well start. You're having a family, you're a man, but I don't see it. So it's time you start acting like one, because I'm not going to clean your mess up like you're some little kid.

PETE: (Hurt.) Mom? I thought you were going to help me get through this?

TINA: I'm wondering how I can help you if you don't help yourself.

PETE: (Hurt.) Touche... ouch.

TINA: Well, that's reality. That's responsibility.

PETE: I'm sorry mom, I'll clean up. I guess I did make a big mess. (Starts cleaning.)

TINA: I'm going to finish getting ready. We're leaving here in twenty minutes.

PETE: Wait mom... I made the decision to tell Grandma. Is that okay?

TINA: We'll discuss it on the way. Get ready to go guys...

(Pete cleans while Lilly starts to make a bowl of cereal. Tina exits.)

LILLY: (Nicely.) Why'd you make this mess anyway?

PETE: I was baking a loaf of bread to bring to Grandma. Thought it would make her smile, maybe brighten her spirits a little bit.

LILLY: Oh... that was nice of you.

PETE: I thought so too. (Pause.) I was going to bring Dottie today. She's on her way over, actually. I want to introduce her to Grandma.

LILLY: Yeah? Do mom and I get to see her?

PETE: I was hoping you guys would get to see her in the car, then after we go see Grandma I was going to offer to take everyone to get some pizza. Do you think Mom would mind if Dottie came?

LILLY: I honestly don't know Pete... That could go either way with the mood Mom's in.

PETE: That's true... Well, I'll have her come here and see what Mom says.

LILLY: Yeah, Mom'll be pissed if she doesn't want Dottie to come, especially if she has to tell Dottie to stay behind the first time they meet.

(Pete shrugs.)

LILLY: That's all? You can't say anything about that? You've changed...

PETE: (Angry and bitter.) Why are you so mad at me today? I've barely been home for months now but as soon as you find out I have a daughter on the way you're pissed for no reason. We should be a family now, not jumping down each other's throats for no reason! We need to be a family for Grandma! For Belle! For Dottie!

LILLY: (Screaming but near tears.) If we're a family then how come mom didn't know she was going to be a grandmother, and grandma didn't know she was going to be a great grandmother? If we're a family then how come you never told any of us?!

PETE: Listen Lill-

(Pete goes to hug her and she shoves him away.)

LILLY: Don't even try to cover up for yourself Pete. You suck at being a member of this family, you suck at being a brother and a son. Face it, you suck at being a family member period!

PETE: Lil-

LILLY: And let's be clear on one thing. If I ever get knocked up, I would have told you straight away. I would have looked to you before the entire thing even got away from me.

PETE: Lilly come o-

LILLY: Stop trying to make me feel better Pete. You messed up big time. And Dottie coming over is one of the worst ideas you have ever had, ever. Besides getting her pregnant.

PETE: Having a baby wasn't an idea that I just thought of! It was an accident and I would take it back if I could but I can't so I'm facing up to the fact that I'm going to have a daughter to take care of and be responsible for.

(Tina enters worried.)

TINA: What's all the yelling?

LILLY: Pete invited Dottie to come with us to the hospital, mom. Pete invited Dottie to come and meet Grandma.

TINA: Pete?

(knocking sound. Pete gets the door after taking a deep breath. Dottie enters.)

PETE: Mom, Lilly, I'd like you both to meet Dottie. My girlfriend.

DOTTIE: So nice to finally meet you both.

(Black out.)

Scene 6

Lights up on Pete sitting on his stool. The kitchen scene is masked by the curtain, and the hospital waiting room is brought in front of it.

PETE: (To Audience.) As you can imagine... that was interesting. Lilly and mom had a hard time not staring at Dottie's gigantic stomach- which she's self-conscious about- by the way. But we were able to get through the meeting without mom freaking out, which was a plus. We went on over to the hospital and Mom went in with Lilly first. The two of them became buddy-buddy after my whole situation happened. They wanted to be with each other constantly while coping with my mess up. It was kind of annoying, but kind of nice to know that mom had someone to go to and talk to about this entire thing besides Grandma.

(Lights come up on the waiting room. Dottie is sitting in one of the chairs looking at the place, where he is going to sit, sad. Pete walks over while he continues to talk.)

PETE: (To Audience.) Dottie and I waited for them to come tell us it was our turn. We could only go in two people at a time; they didn't want to overwhelm grandma... especially with this situation. So they're prepping her for what's about to come. I'm going to tell her and she's going to pretend I'm the first one to tell her... all part of the plan to try and save her from sudden shock.

(Pete sits down and puts his head in his hands.)

DOTTIE: (Rubbing his back.) Hey, you okay baby?

PETE: Just a little nervous is all...

DOTTIE: I am too but don't worry, we'll all be okay. I'm sure your grandmother is going to be okay. Maybe this is a miracle she's been praying for.

PETE: I don't think she wants me to have a kid before I reach twenty.

DOTTIE: (Sighs.) Babe...

PETE: I'm sorry. I'm sorry, that was out of line. You know I'm just as excited as you... (Puts his hand on her stomach.) It's going to be amazing.

(Dottie leans over and gives him a kiss on the cheek. She moves her hand over his and squeezes.)

DOTTIE: I know we can do this together, I'm not afraid of anything that could happen and I hope you know you shouldn't be either.

PETE: (Nods.) I won't be after we see Grandma...

(Lilly enters with a broken smile and tries to look optimistic.)

LILLY: Mom will be out in a second- then it's your turn.

PETE: (Stands.) Is she prepared? I mean, we're not going to give her a heart attack or anything right?

LILLY: Please... that woman on the bed? You'd think she was just told she was going to live forever. She's actually really excited.

DOTTIE: Wait until we tell her the baby is getting a part of her name...

LILLY: (Touched.) Wait- really?

(Dottie stands with a little help from Pete.)

PETE: Yeah- oh I never told you guys. Maybelle Elizabeth... Elizabeth for Grandma.

LILLY: (Trying to hide the hurt under the happiness.) Wow, thanks guys... but Pete... anything else you forgot to tell us? Now's the time.

PETE: I'm sorry Lilly, I'm sorry. I keep messing up but...

DOTTIE: That's all Lilly, I don't think we have any other surprises.

LILLY: (Yelling) We? You two are a we now? Great when's the wedding.

DOTTIE: No... Lilly that's not how I meant that!

LILLY: Then how did you mean it Dottie? How did you?

PETE: Lilly back off...

DOTTIE: Lilly I'm sorry that came out really wrong.

(Tina enters and can feel the tension.)

TINA: You two ready?

PETE: Yeah... we're ready. Let's go hun.

(Pete puts his hand on the center of Dottie's back and guides her out.)

LILLY: So... the baby's middle name is going to be Elizabeth, for Grandma.

TINA: That's nice...

LILLY: Did he tell you?

TINA: No...

LILLY: He doesn't tell me anything anymore either...

TINA: (Defensive.) He's been busy...

LILLY: (Attitude.) Screwing up?

TINA: Lilly... we don't need that right now...

LILLY: What do we need then mom? Some help? Some advice? Wisdom?

TINA: (Near tears.) Your father...

(A beat.)

LILLY: We need to talk to Pete...

TINA: (Correcting.) We need to get him to talk to us.

(Beat.)

LILLY: We also need to make it clear that Dottie is not a member of our family. She might be caring a future member but she can't weasel her way into our lives so easily.

TINA: Did something happen?

LILLY: I just didn't like her attitude.

(A beat.)

LILLY: And mom...

TINA: Yes sweetie?

LILLY: Despite Pete's situation... I think we turned out to be two good kids thanks to you. (Hugs Tina.)

TINA: (Hugs back.) Thanks dear.

(They freeze. Lights fade out on them.)

Scene 7

The waiting room scene in the center has been moved out and the kitchen is back again. The stage remains in the dark. Spotlight up on Pete.

PETE: (To Audience.) So... Grandma was happy to see and meet Dottie. Grandma even got to feel the baby kick, which seemed to make her feel worlds better... Like we had given her more will to live, like Lilly had predicted. Which was weird for me to see, Lilly and I used to be the ones that made her feel that way... but we'd been way too busy in our own lives to even call her.

(Spotlight off Pete. Spotlight comes up on Lilly sitting in her bed with her laptop in her lap. The two are in their own separate worlds.)

LILLY: (To herself.) My father was my hero, well; he still is and will always be. I don't go a day without thinking of him and wishing he were still here...

(Spot off Lilly. Spot on Pete.)

PETE: (To Audience.) I know what would make Grandma proud though, what would make up for my lack of attention. Being the best dad I could be, the best family man. Teaching Maybelle to make bread... bread.

(Spot off Pete. Spot on Lilly.)

LILLY: (To herself.) I wish he could see and give Pete advice. To talk to him and help him figure out what to do with his life... how to be a good father. (Clicking around on her laptop.) Dottie's pretty with that pregnant glow...

(Spot off Lilly. Spot on Pete.)

PETE: (To Audience.) Dottie was so happy after she met my family. She had been asking me for months to introduce them and I kept putting it off. I was so afraid of what they would say... what they would think of me...

(Spot off Pete. Spot on Lilly.)

LILLY: (Angry. Growing angrier as she talks. Talking to herself.) They already had the baby shower? He didn't even tell us in time so we could go to the baby shower! We're his family! His flesh and blood and he didn't even tell us in time! I can't believe he would do this to us! Her family probably thinks that we're a horrible, broken family that doesn't care about each other's lives!

(Spot on Pete.)

TINA: (Offstage.) Pete! Lilly! Dinner time!

PETE AND LILLY: (Shouts back together.) Coming!

PETE: (To audience.) I'll turn around their views. I'll make them see how much I have matured, and how I can take care of a baby and more importantly, a family.

LILLY: (To audience. Furious.) I'm going to kill him.

(They exit and spot fades off Lilly. The lights fade on to the kitchen scene. Tina enters and finishes cooking up dinner. Pete enters. The entire time Tina has an "I don't care attitude" going.)

PETE: Can I help mom?

TINA: Yeah... come stir the pasta. I'm going to get some bread out of the freezer.

PETE: (Confused.) The freezer?

TINA: Yeah... the freezer. I have some bread in there from Stop and Shop that I bought a week ago just in case.

PETE: Stop and Shop? Just in case? We never... ever eat bread we didn't bake ourselves.

TINA: You were around less, Lilly was always busy and Grandma wasn't really that hungry. I wasn't going to go through the trouble of baking bread by myself to eat bread by myself...

PETE: (Hurt. Defensive.) Mom you're never going to be eating by yourself, ever! And as for baking bread by yourself, that's never going to happen. I'm going to be baking bread for my family all the time, I'm going to make sure Maybelle even knows the recipe.

TINA: I'll believe that when I see it.

PETE: Well you can count on you seeing it. In fact if it was okay with you, tonight I was going to have Dottie come over so the two of us could bake bread for Grandma.

TINA: Do whatever you want.

PETE: Mom why are you acting like this?

(Lilly enters.)

LILLY: (Furious. Yelling.) Are you freaking kidding me Pete? What the hell is wrong with you? Having a baby and not even caring enough to tell your own family?! How selfish can you be?

PETE: (Defensive and cautious.) Lilly... you know about the baby... you know about her name... mom knows I'm going to teach her how to bake bread. I've pretty much told you everything- there's nothing to hide.

LILLY: Right... right... but everything you hid so long made us miss the baby shower! The baby's shower, Pete! That's a really big deal. I don't think you understand. Her family probably thinks so poorly of us, thinks we're horrible for not going. Meanwhile you just didn't even tell us that there was a baby to even throw a shower for!!

TINA: (Hurt.) We missed the baby shower?

PETE: (Defeated.) Yeah... it was a few days ago. I'm so sorry. TINA: (Disappointed.) A few days ago you couldn't find the courage... you couldn't find the words to tell your own mother and sister about your baby?

PETE: I was afraid you'd be mad...

LILLY: Yes we'd be mad! You can't imagine we wouldn't be mad! Eitherway we would've been mad! But Pete, the baby shower! The baby shower!

PETE: Why does a stupid baby shower mean so much to you?

LILLY: The principal's Pete, the principal's!

PETE: I don't think you should be this mad about a baby shower.

TINA: (Yelling.) Of course we're be mad! (Takes a deep breath and pulls herself together.) My son, Lilly's brother, our nineteen year old boy is having a baby! A baby he didn't even tell us about until the baby was practically born. We missed moments hun, moments. We missed sonograms, decorating, the baby shower, the first kick... we missed moments that we can't get back. This baby is going to be born and his own Grandmother would have been clueless if you waited any longer. That's a pretty serious thing Pete!

PETE: (Nearly yelling.) But Mom you will still be able to be a part of actual moments once the baby's born! Once she's here you will have so many things you can do to experience my miracle!

LILLY: (Yelling.) We still missed out on so much!

PETE: I don't understand why this is such a big deal! You guys are yelling over nothing!

TINA: Pete a baby isn't nothing! A baby is so much more than you could possibly imagine! You don't know how much a baby is until you have one.

PETE: Mom I know how much it is and I have been working to-

TINA: Working doesn't give you everything Pete! Working won't get you out of all the diaper bills and medical expenses. Babies need a lot of love and care besides the money, how are you going to be able to support that chil-

PETE: I've got it all planned out.

TINA: No you don't Pete. You don't realize what you're doing. You don't realize what could happen to you or what could become of all of this.

PETE: (Crosses toward Tina as he yells.) Don't tell me what I do or don't realize. Don't tell me what my future is going to be-

(Tina slaps Pete across the face. Lilly gasps. Everyone is shocked.)

TINA: Pete...? Are you okay?

(Exits running off stage.)

LILLY: (Scared.) Mom?

TINA: I'm going to go lay down...

LILLY: (Worried.) Mom? Are you okay?

TINA: (Bare whisper.) No... I wish your father was here.

(Tina exits toward her bed room.)

LILLY: Mom... (Lilly goes and sits at the table. She fingers her phone in her pocket. Deliberating whether or not to use it. Then she takes it out.)

(She starts texting.) I'll text him... "Where did you go?"

(She closes her phone and puts it down. To the audience.) I can't believe that just happened. Mom has never hit us. She has never done anything or reached that point. She has always broken up our fights, sat us down and explained there is no room for violence inside a family. But now...

(Lilly's phone goes off. She picks it up and reads it.) A message from Pete... "I'm still here. I'm in my car."

(To audience.) He's still in his car? I really thought he would've been to Dottie's by now. (She texts him back.) My response? "Pete, come back inside."

(She puts her phone down and continues to the audience.) Why did mom do that? No, I can't blame her. She was upset...

(Phone goes off again.) He responded... "Maybe." (To audience.) Why couldn't he be a little nicer about this situation?

(She texts back.) "Why don't you leave? You obviously don't want to be here."

(To audience.) I wish my family wasn't so messed up. I wish I could just shut my eyes and go to a different place, a happier place where none of this ever happened. (Starts crying.) Why...

(Pete enters slowly.)

PETE: (Softly.) I didn't leave because real men don't run from their problems. They face them. That's something I've learned, and I really should have told you guys a long time ago.

LILLY: You think?

PETE: I didn't mean to upset you guys. I feel like I keep trying to tell you guys that but it's getting me nowhere...

LILLY: Because you did upset us...

PETE: But I didn't mean to...

LILLY: I know... but you still did... (Lilly reaches her arms out for him to come over and they share an awkward hug.)

PETE: Where's mom?

LILLY: In her room, upset. She's really mad at herself about this. That slap definitely hurt her more than it could have ever hurt you.

PETE: (Soft chuckle. Trying to lighten the mood.) That's debatable, mom's got an arm.

(Pete moves over toward where Tina exited and shouts toward her bedroom.)

PETE: Mom? Can you come back please? I'm sorry... can we talk about this?

(Tina enters slowly. Pete crosses back to the table and sits. Lilly pulls out a chair and beckons her to join them and sit. Tina does so.)

TINA: I'm sorry Pete...

PETE: No Mom, I'm sorry...

TINA: It's just... You want to be a responsible father, but first you have to start showing some responsibility other ways. Telling us would have been a responsible and courage thing to do. Raising a baby won't be easy; it'll definitely be a challenge. And telling us would have been a minor speed bump in the many challenges ahead. Which you failed son. If you failed to do that, and wouldn't listen to what I was trying to tell you, how could I expect you to succeed?

PETE: I get that it won't be easy. I just... want you guys to be a part of it. To help if I need it and to give me the support I need.

TINA: Do you understand why that's a lot to ask?

PETE: I guess so...

LILLY: Pete, we care about you and we will care about Belle, but honestly it's going to be hard for us to just suddenly accept that you're having a baby.

PETE: I just want you guys to understand...

TINA: I'm asking you to understand ours. We can't accept this overnight. We can't just miraculously see your side. Sure, we'll support you. But the hurt will be here for a while...

LILLY: (Hurt.) Pete you can't hide anything like this from us again... this isn't something Dad would've done... so why are you doing it? You and I both know he would not be proud...

PETE: (Pete stands and paces.) I know... I'm really sorry. I'm really... really... sorry... and don't accept my apology if you can't. But still support Dottie... and if you can forgive me, me too... and Belle... I promise I'll never do this to you guys ever... ever... again.

(Tina gets up and crosses toward Pete.)

TINA: I know Pete... I know... (Tina goes over and pulls Pete into a hug. He hugs back and they both start to cry softly. Lilly joins them.)

LILLY: I love you Pete...

PETE: I love you both, so much.

TINA: I love you too.

(Black out.)

Scene 8

Stage is dark. Lights up on Pete at his stood. He's cradling a baby in his arms. He has the biggest smile on.

PETE: (To Audience.) So baby Maybelle was born- seven pounds, eight ounces. No complications, she and her mother both did fine. I can't stop looking at her, and smiling. A couple days after I brought her to the hospital so Grandma could see her. I mean... she couldn't hold Belle, she's still sick after all, but she was excited to see her Great Granddaughter. It really put a smile on her face, and mine.

Mom held Belle and I could see the love on her face. Lilly was the same. Now they walk around with my Belle as the background on their phones and talk about her all the time. My little sweetheart...

She stays at Dottie's house primarily, but I sleep over a few nights a week so that Dottie isn't constantly getting up to take care of her when Belle wakes up during the night. Mom wasn't too happy with it but she told me she trusted me to make my own decisions.

(He looks down at Maybelle.)

I'm still working to make sure I can help pay for her, but now working isn't a chore... it's something I want to do to take care of my family. It's something that the family man does, it's something that he takes pride in. Well I'm proud of my work and to take care of my little family. I can't imagine in any other way...

(Dottie enters.)

DOTTIE: I think it's time for someone's bottle!

(Pete hands Dottie Belle and smiles. Dottie gives Maybelle the bottle. Pete remains in his own little world- Dottie does not acknowledge anything he is saying.)

PETE: I mean... my little miracle is the miracle I think my entire family needed to bring everyone closer together. Even though for a while things were getting worse, they took a change for the better. After all, Grandpa always said things had to get worse before they get better... (Pete puts his arm around Dottie. She smiles up at him.)

Grandpa and Dad, I can only hope that they're looking down at me proud. Their little Pete is now a family man, just like they both were. Maybe not as good as they were, but I'm working on it. I'll do everything I can to be the Dad Maybelle wants to hang out with and the boyfriend, and hopefully husband, that Dottie can rely and depend on.

DOTTIE: (Breaking into his personal world.) Babe, I'm going to go lay her down for a nap and then I'm going to go rest.

PETE: Here... I'll take her. You go rest.

(Pete holds his arms out to take Maybelle. Dottie smiles and gives him Maybelle.)

DOTTIE: Thanks, you're the best.

(She gives him a kiss on the cheek, takes the bottle and exits.)

PETE: Okay Belle! Time to go sleepy!

(He smiles down at her and exits. Spot light fades out to a complete blackout. End of play.)



Brent and Ali vs. The World

Brent Middleton

Moonlight glistens off our glasses as we giggle
And confess. The fountain gurgles contentedly behind us
As life's mysteries unravel themselves before our eyes.
Outside we take refuge, facing the world in person
While others cower inside and wreak havoc.
The fountain weeps the tears we choke back
As the cool night air soothes any heated arguments
That arise. We're here because we care more
Than others dare to dream.
Will our destinies ever be secure?
I look through the endless valley to the River of Stars.

A Damaged Silhouette

By: Julia Zioto

All genius is born from an innocent silhouette
Her playground is confined
Aching memories store her brain, tamper her logic, and leave only cavities
A liberating mind, now tampered, left hoaxed
Though appears with composure, it takes only one knock to deliver pandemonium
Restrictions, society, false when true, leave this girl with no map

How can a trail be found with no map?
Weeping eyes and spiked ears pierce her silhouette
Homeless, she supplements this with pandemonium
Stories of pain inside these welcome mats stay confined
A professor, doctors, shrinks spell lies and suggestions pour to replace a business deal hoaxed
After appointment and after delay all this girl leaves with is a freshly planted cavity

Mr. Gloom is the greatest God to cavities
His instructions guide like that of a legend on a map
Instructions rarely come intended and promises once made are hoaxed
Painfully, perfect sorrow, drips on her silhouette
Her garden of experience grows yet her lessons stay confined
Restless agitation starves her of this place and opens another mourning door to pandemonium

She escapes to this pandemonium
All she feels are her cavities
Her large words remain confined
Never to be opened, never to be heard, never to be placed on a map
Questions unanswered, equations unsolved, drench this silhouette
-Again hoaxed

Just use addition when subtraction is obviously hoaxed
Fear that this weakens pandemonium
An honest silhouette
Burned with sixty-three cavities
Discoveries of treasures cannot compare to what's and who's to that's and theirs, on her map
Nothing is ever really certain and always undoubtedly confined

Her world is secure from intruders only if confined
For if she were free from pain, memories would escape, trickling out-hoaxed
No police could trace that map
What society could meet this disturbance, her evolving tunnels transcribe a fate drowning
pandemonium?
Her graffiti sets in like a cavity
An extinguisher blasts freedom to a damaged silhouette

Insecure, alone, and withering- this pandemonium forces her to a world confined
All love and energy spits cavities- all hoaxed
Like breaking a mirror following a trail of glass, this unlucky silhouette moves backwards,
Without navigation, without a map.



The Gift of Love

Erin MacDonald

She felt that feeling you get when you're so elated you don't know whether to smile or cry. That feeling that rises from deep within you and warms your entire being to the point that you wonder if your head will explode. All of these years of waiting and anticipation have led up to now. And she is completely satisfied. No, more than satisfied. She has no idea how to repay him. She has no idea how to thank him and explain that in this moment, he has given her more than she could ever ask for. It is in this simple moment that he has given her the gift of love. He has given her a Valentine.



Forgotten Arms

Brent Middleton

So I was dashing through the city, the guards breathing right down my neck!

Right, right.

And I was running along the roof of this building, hopping from one to the next.

That's crazy!

Ha, yeah! I ran straight out of there into this forest, and I finally got to cool off in some shade.

Right, that's good.

So the forest leads me straight to this sprawling field of cherry blossoms, stretching out far as the eye can see.

Shoot.

Tell me about it. Most beautiful thing I ever saw in my life, I'm proud to say. But it's the next thing that really dropped my jaw.

Well let's hear it then?

I'm walking through the field, and I see this lil' old lady sitting down against the biggest blossom.

Lil' old lady?

Yeah. So I walk over, being curious and all. And when I finally introduce myself and she lifts her head up from the ground...

Yeah?

It's my mum Arnold! It's my bloody mum. I haven't seen her since I was 10!

The hell! You haven't seen your mum in 10 years??

No! I was so shocked I stumbled backwards and fell on the ground. And you know what she did next?

Well stop teasing and tell!

She gets up, hobbles over to me, falls on her knees and takes me up in her arms, saying "My little boy, run from me and now come back. Thank God."

Ha! Isn't that something.

Sure was. I'd forgotten the affection of those arms...

A Damaged Silhouette

By: Julia Zioto

All genius is born from an innocent silhouette
Her playground is confined
Aching memories store her brain, tamper her logic, and leave only cavities
A liberating mind, now tampered, left hoaxed
Though appears with composure, it takes only one knock to deliver pandemonium
Restrictions, society, false when true, leave this girl with no map

How can a trail be found with no map?
Weeping eyes and spiked ears pierce her silhouette
Homeless, she supplements this with pandemonium
Stories of pain inside these welcome mats stay confined
A professor, doctors, shrinks spell lies and suggestions pour to replace a business deal hoaxed
After appointment and after delay all this girl leaves with is a freshly planted cavity

Mr. Gloom is the greatest God to cavities
His instructions guide like that of a legend on a map
Instructions rarely come intended and promises once made are hoaxed
Painfully, perfect sorrow, drips on her silhouette
Her garden of experience grows yet her lessons stay confined
Restless agitation starves her of this place and opens another mourning door to pandemonium

She escapes to this pandemonium
All she feels are her cavities
Her large words remain confined
Never to be opened, never to be heard, never to be placed on a map
Questions unanswered, equations unsolved, drench this silhouette
-Again hoaxed

Just use addition when subtraction is obviously hoaxed
Fear that this weakens pandemonium
An honest silhouette
Burned with sixty-three cavities
Discoveries of treasures cannot compare to what's and who's to that's and theirs, on her map
Nothing is ever really certain and always undoubtedly confined

Her world is secure from intruders only if confined
For if she were free from pain, memories would escape, trickling out-hoaxed
No police could trace that map
What society could meet this disturbance, her evolving tunnels transcribe a fate drowning pandemonium?
Her graffiti sets in like a cavity
An extinguisher blasts freedom to a damaged silhouette

Insecure, alone, and withering- this pandemonium forces her to a world confined
All love and energy spits cavities- all hoaxed
Like breaking a mirror following a trail of glass, this unlucky silhouette moves backwards,
Without navigation, without a map.

Subtle Wisdom

Brent Middleton

During a time of great devastation and anguish, a young man asked his Elder, “Dominus, why do you choose to live and continue to struggle and be re-broken every day?”

The Elder simply responded, “I live because I have faith, young one. I have faith that we’ll one day leave behind this abysmal nation for a land of justice and honor.”

The boy, ever persistent, questioned further: “But Dominus, you yourself claim no religion nor study and spirits nor worship any idols. What is it that you have such strong conviction in, such unshakable faith, when so many struggle to keep hold of the faith they’ve based their entire livelihoods on?”

The old man reached out and placed his hand on the young man’s shoulder. He looked him both seriously and tenderly in the eyes. “I do not waiver because I have faith in hope, my dear boy. With hope all is possible. Without, all is lost. With hope society can continue towards betterment; without, it would crumble and life would lose its meaning. Without hope, there is no life. And so you see, this is why I have faith in it. I must if I wish to believe in life.



Faith
Adam Andexer

He climbed up the stairs of Invesco Field. Popcorn clutched in his left hand, a game program and beer balanced in his right, he walked to the top of section 508; the upper deck. He looked at his ticket and sat down in row U seat 37. The man, dressed in a white and blue jersey stamped with the number twelve, looked down towards the field. There the players stood like ants warming up, throwing the ball and running through drills in preparation for the battle which was about to occur. Marred in a sea of navy and orange, the man sat alone. He wasn't used to being so far from the action. The past four weeks he had stood on the sideline with the players who now donned navy and orange. Other spectators murmured in anticipation of kickoff. They talked of the miracle man, Number 15. He had done the impossible the past four weeks, but the fans called out, beckoning him to do the impossible once more. The man stared in wonder as the players converged towards their respective sideline. There, Number 15 knelt in silence praying to his savior asking for his will to be done. The clock hit zero as the captains ran onto the field for the coin toss. The crowd erupted into excitement. The game was set to begin. The man smiled and thought to himself. Those who wanted to believe would believe. One more win wouldn't convert the skeptics. The people's savior was about to take the field. Number 15 got up off the bench and looked at the man in Section 508, row U, seat 37. The man looked back at Number 15. They both knew that there would be no miracle today.



Linus

Samantha Malachowski

Chapter 1: The Garbage Kitten

Linus didn't come from a shelter or a loving home like his brothers did. Instead, Linus spent the first six months of his life in an alley behind a small burger shack by a beach. Whenever one of the big two footed creatures (Linus called them "hoomins") would try to touch him, he would hide under his dumpster until the hoomins walked away.

Sometimes the hoomins weren't so bad. The smaller ones would drop food in his dumpster. Linus would wait until the hoomins walked far away and he couldn't smell them anymore before running out from under his dumpster and snatching the dropped morsel, quickly scurrying back underneath.

A few months passed and the weather started getting colder. Less and less hoomins came around the burger shack and his dumpster. Linus had never experienced what the hoomins called "winter" and didn't understand why the burger shack was covered with metal sheets or why hoomins weren't running in the sand. After a few weeks, Linus started feeling cold and hungry and spent most of his days sleeping and dreaming of hoomin food as his stomach ferociously growled.

One night, Linus dreamed of grilled chicken dancing in front of him. He could even smell the delicious spices and seasonings. Linus was abruptly pulled from his dream as his stomach gave a cruel snarl, waking him up and reminding him of how hungry he really was.

And then Linus saw it.

A piece of chicken only three feet away from him.

Linus' whiskers twitched in anticipated ecstasy as the chicken enveloped his senses.

Linus smacked his lips, trying to taste the tantalizing aroma.

The spices seemed to dance joyfully across the meat.

He bet it tasted as good as it looked.

Linus, who was usually very careful when it came to fetching his food and would smell for hoomins, wiggled his hips and quickly sprinted towards the temptation.

Had Linus used his instincts, he would have noticed a hoomin holding a giant rod with a bag at the end only a few feet alongside the chicken.

"Gotcha," said the hoomin wearing a shirt with the label 'Animal Control.'

The next thing he knew, Linus was surrounded by darkness.

But it didn't matter as he chomped on the first piece of hoomin food he had enjoyed in almost a month.

Chapter 2: A New Home

Within a few weeks, Linus went from being a loner to having three brothers, all watched over by 'The Hoomin,' his new 'owner.'

At first, Linus didn't like his brothers one bit. He had never lived with anyone but himself and was shocked by how something that looked like him could lay next to something that looked like The Hoomin.

The oldest was Pewter, a dopey fellow who was all gray. Pewter spent most of his days sleeping next to The Hoomin and eating cat treats called Pownce. Linus thought Pewter was the biggest traitor of them all, considering how affectionate he was with The Hoomin.

Next was Noodle. He was very clean and carried an attitude of arrogance, spending most of his time perched high above on counters or cabinets, supervising his brothers.

Finally, there was Watson, the strongest of the four. He had large muscles and little brains, thinking more about his next meal than anything else.

And then there was The Hoomin.

The Hoomin was the only two-legged creature in the house and he would leave during the day and come back before the sun would set. For the most part, Linus avoided The Hoomin as he had never met one worth trusting, especially as it was a hoomin who took him from his dumpster. Every time The Hoomin would try to hold Linus in his lap, he would shriek and fly across the room not without leaving a good scratch or two on his lap or arm, though.

Every night, Linus would reluctantly eat from the gloopy can with his brothers and every night Linus would watch The Hoomin get his food from the giant box in the kitchen (The Hoomin called it the “friggerader”), not from a gloopy can.

One night, Linus had enough of the gloopy can and decided it was time to rekindle his relationship with hoomin food.

But he couldn't do it alone.

Chapter 3: The Plan

“So let me get this straight,” Noodle put his head on his front paws as he looked down at Linus from the top cabinet. “You’re going to open the friggerader and get us The Hoomin’s food? Sounds tricky,” Noodle purred coyly and tilted his head condescendingly. “And how do you plan on doing it? Growing thumbs and walking on two legs?”

“That’s impossible,” Watson snorted. “You can’t just grow thumbs. Or start walking on two legs. You could try. But it would be really hard.”

Noodle disregarded Watson’s remark and continued to stare at Linus. Pewter stretched out next to Linus and purred softly.

“I think it’s a great idea,” mewed Pewter. “I bet The Hoomin’s food is amazing.” His stomach began to growl at the thought. “It always smells scrumptious.”

“It’s the best thing ever,” Linus told Pewter matter-of-factly. “It tastes like nothing else and you’ll never want that gloopy can meat ever again!”

Watson lowered his ears in disappointment. “But I like that gloopy can,” he cooed. “Especially the gravy,” He licked his chops in excitement as his thoughts took over his attention. “I want some gravy now.”

Linus vigorously shook his head. “That isn’t real gravy! The Hoomin has all the real gravy and real food, we have to get some!”

“And you still haven’t answered my question, genius,” hissed Noodle as he flicked his whiskers in annoyance. “How is this going to happen?”

“That’s why I need your help,” Linus answered. “I can’t do it all by myself. I need all of your help to get the friggerader open.”

“I’m in,” Pewter meowed. “I can’t wait to taste The Hoomin’s food.”

“Me neither,” said Watson excitedly. “I hope there’s real gravy in there! I’m in.”

Linus and his two brothers looked up at Noodle, waiting for an answer.

“Fine!” Noodle hissed. “Count me in. But I don’t think it will work.” Noodle pulled himself off the edge of the cabinet and sat in silence as he heard his brothers celebrate and begin to scheme.

Chapter 4: The Plan Thickens (Like Real Gravy)

“Are you sure this will even work?” Noodle hissed out of the side of his mouth, his whiskers twitching.

“As long as you keep look-out, we’ll be fine,” assured Linus. After days of planning and watching The Hoomin open the friggerader, it was finally time for Linus to claim what was rightfully his. Linus purred silently to himself, admiring just how brilliant he had become and how The Hoomin should be his pet, and not the other way around.

“This will never work,” Noodle interjected Linus’ thoughts and pounced onto the floor from his look-out post on top of the cabinet. “If The Hoomin wakes up and sees you, he’ll never let us have Pownce again.”

“I love Pownce,” Pewter purred, mostly to himself. Pewter licked his lips and twitched his tail as he thought about the Pownce flavors ‘Savory Salmon’ and ‘Delightful Dairy.’ “Do you think there’s Pownce in the friggerader?”

“The friggrader only has The Hoomin’s food,” Watson said. “The Hoomin doesn’t eat Pownce.” Watson curled his tail around his feet and pondered. “Or does he? I don’t know. He should try it, it’s purrrrrfectly delicious.” Quickly, Watson joined Pewter in a daydream of all the Pownce in the world just theirs for the taking.

Noodle swiped his protracted claws against Pewter’s and Watson’s noses, pulling them out of their field of Pownce and back into The Hoomin’s kitchen.

“You idiots!” Noodle’s ears laid flat against his head. “Why do I have to be stuck with a bunch of fools?! I’m calling this off,” Noodle whipped his tail at Linus. “There is no way this will work with these nimrods.”

Chapter 5: The Mani-Feast-o

“I’m no idiot,” Watson’s tail began to poof. “All you have to do is be the look out! Anyone could do that!”

Noodle and Watson hissed at each other as Noodle geared up for another swipe of his paw. Pewter, not wanting to get between the fight, started off towards the living room, mumbling to himself “I bet The Hoomin dropped some Pownce in here somewhere...”

“STOP!” hissed Linus. He growled and snarled at Noodle until he retracted his claws and let Watson out from the corner of the kitchen. Pewter trotted back into the kitchen after hearing the fight end. Linus looked at his three brothers and puffed out his chest.

“Don’t you guys see?” Linus slowly walked around them, his tail remaining fixated on each one as he passed. “This isn’t about who is smarter or what we can’t do. Every night The Hoomin dictates what time we can eat dinner and every night he feeds us from a meesely can filled with ‘pâté’ meat and gloopy gravy.” Pewter burped with dread and Noodle and Watson wrinkled their noses at the thought of the canned food.

“Well,” continued Linus, “not tonight.” Linus stopped walking and stood facing all three of his brothers. “It’s time we take charge. We are treated as the inferior species of the household. The Hoomin thinks he is smarter than us and doesn’t give us the delicious treats we deserve! Well, brothers, The Hoomin can’t tell me what to eat and when to eat ever again! Succulent raw chicken, salty tuna, juicy red steak, and buttery potatoes are all there for who... The Hoomin alone?! I’m getting in the friggrader if it is the last thing I do.

“Every night, we are fed by The Hoomin... well, tonight, WE FEED OURSELVES!”

Noodle, Watson, and Pewter caterwauled in excitement and ran to their stations.

Chapter 6: The Ruse

When the sun would set and The Hoomin came home, he always had a cup of tea and watched television for a few hours before opening a gloopy can for Linus and his brothers. Linus watched how The Hoomin would add sugar and milk to his tea and let it sit for a few minutes before starting to drink it.

If Linus could get The Hoomin away from his tea for just a second, he could start the master plan.

“I can handle that,” Noodle had said earlier, laying his ears slightly back and glancing at Watson. “Leave the distraction to me.”

Now, as Linus tightly held one sleeping pill between his teeth, he was wondering what was taking Noodle so long. Linus had found a lost sleeping pill under The Hoomins bed one night and knew it would come in handy someday.

The Hoomin had just set up his tea and sat down on the couch, waiting for his tea to cool down. Any second, he would start drinking it and there would be no way to begin the plan.

Come on, Noodle, thought Linus, twitching his ears to listen for Noodle’s ‘sign.’

The Hoomin slowly brought the tea to his lips and took a few sips. The tea was perfect for The Hoomin. It’s too late, thought Linus as he lowered his ears in defeat. It’s over.

Chapter 7: The Dose

Just as Linus was ready to give up, he finally heard it.

A loud shriek and hissing broke through the air as Noodle tumbled out of the bedroom and into the hallway, caught in a fight with Watson. Watson wailed as Noodle sunk his teeth into his tail and swiped at Noodle’s face with his claws.

“What the hell is wrong with you guys?!” The Hoomin slammed his teacup on the coffee table and ran into the hallway, leaving Linus the perfect opportunity to fulfill the hardest part of the plan.

Quickly, Linus jumped on top of the coffee table and dropped the pill into the tea.

Linus watched as the pill sank to the bottom of the cup, hidden by the milk and unnoticeable.

Just as Linus jumped down from the table, The Hoomin walked back into the living room, shaking his head and mumbling to himself.

“What has gotten into you guys?” The Hoomin asked to Linus. “You guys have been acting so strange lately.”

Linus looked up at him, tilting his head to the side.

The Hoomin reached down to pet Linus’ head, but he avoided his hand and walked away a few feet, not taking his eyes off The Hoomin.

Sighing, The Hoomin sat on the couch and took a sip of his tea.

The plan was finally in motion.

Chapter 8: While You Were Sleeping

Soon, The Hoomin started yawning. This was Pewter’s queue.

Pewter jumped into The Hoomin’s lap and started purring and rubbing his tail against him. Lovingly, he settled into his lap and purred loudly. Within a few minutes, The Hoomin was ready for phase two of the plan.

“Time for a nap,” yawned The Hoomin. As The Hoomin stood up, holding Pewter to his chest, Linus couldn’t help but meow in excitement.

“Do you want to come too?” cooed The Hoomin to Linus. Immediately, Linus ran under the couch and out of sight, not wanting to jeopardize the plan.

Shrugging, The Hoomin took Pewter into the bedroom. Noodle, who was watching from on top of the dresser, jumped down and watched as The Hoomin placed Pewter on the foot of the bed and he climbed under the covers. Once The Hoomin put on his sleeping mask, Noodle knew it would only be a matter of time before he would be asleep.

Within minutes, The Hoomin was lightly snoring and Pewter was asleep.

Noodle gave Pewter a quick swipe with his claw, waking him up and reminding him of the evening’s festivities. Both Pewter and Noodle ran out of the room to begin the next step.

“Alright,” Noodle hissed as he leapt on top of the cabinets to his lookout post where he had a clear view of the bedroom. “He’s asleep. Hurry up!”

Watson leaned against the counter next to the friggrader and braced himself. “Ready when you are, Linus.”

Without a moment to spare, Linus wiggled his bottom once, twice, three times, and then ran across the kitchen floor. Using Watson’s strong back as support, Linus jumped into the air and on top of the counter next to the friggrader.

“I can’t wait to see what is inside,” purred Pewter to himself. He flicked his tail in excitement as Linus approached the friggrader.

“It’s all up to Linus now,” Watson remarked, flicking his whiskers.

Fully concentrated and determined, Linus walked up to the friggrader handle. It was only an inch from his face. He had seen The Hoomin open it dozens of times and all he had to do was pull the door handle. If Linus could push the friggrader door with all his strength, the box would reveal its secrets.

Placing his two front paws against the door, Linus pushed as hard as he could.

The door was heavier than he thought.

“What is taking so long?” barked Noodle. “I’m starving!”

Seeing no other option but to use his head, Linus literally placed his head against the handle and pushed with all four of his paws.

Just as he thought he couldn’t push anymore, the friggrader door opened and Linus tumbled off the counter and onto the floor.

Looking into the friggrater, Linus caterwauled in excitement.

Chapter 9: Gravy Train

Grilled chicken breasts.

Beef tenderloin.

Baked pork chops.

It was everything Linus could ask for.

"Is that..." sniffed Watson as he put his nose against a small container with brown liquid. "... real gravy?"

"I told you guys," Linus started grabbing food with his mouth and throwing it on the floor. "Dig in!"

Noodle immediately grabbed some chicken and jumped right back on the counter to eat high above his brothers. Pewter tried some pork chops and Watson lapped up the gravy. Linus started at some left over steak and worked his way through the entire selection.

"Gravy is amazing," purred Watson as he licked his lips. "I could eat this all day."

"This is so good," Pewter said between bites. "Thanks for getting it, Linus!"

"Yeah," hissed Noodle. "Not a bad job."

Linus couldn't hear any of his brothers, though. With all the food spread out on the floor, Linus was determined to eat as much as he could because he knew it wouldn't last. In his past experience, Linus would have to eat everything he could because he never knew when his next meal was.

After a couple of minutes, Pewter felt very full and yawned to himself. "I'm going to go sleep with The Hoomin now." Pewter trotted into the bedroom and laid on top of The Hoomin's chest and immediately purred himself to sleep.

"My tummy's not growling anymore," reflected Watson. Thinking of all the different types of gravy, Watson perched himself on the windowsill and watched the birds, wondering how they would taste with gravy.

Noodle chuckled to himself as he watched Linus from on top of the cabinet. Linus wasn't paying any attention to his brothers anymore and was eating as much as his tiny tummy could handle.

Which wasn't much.

Chapter 10: Mission Accomplished

"Man, what a great nap," yawned The Hoomin. Stretching his arms, The Hoomin lifted Pewter off his chest and rested his sleeping friend alongside him. He swung his legs over the side of the bed and scratched his chest. Looking at the clock, he realized his small furry friends must have been starving.

"Alright, dinner time." The Hoomin walked out of the bedroom and down the hallway. He saw Noodle perched in his usual spot on top of the cabinet and immediately jumped down and ran out of the kitchen.

How strange, The Hoomin thought. Usually they wouldn't let me forget dinnertime.

When he walked into the kitchen, The Hoomin gasped.

"What happened?!"

There were bits of food and empty containers all over the kitchen floor. Some pieces of chicken remained on the countertops and a trail of gravy sloshed all over the floor.

He closed the refrigerator door shaking his head. "I guess I left it open and they fed themselves." As he bent down to pick up the mess, he saw Linus crouched in the corner of the kitchen, his ears slightly down and his whiskers lowered.

"Did you eat all of this?" The Hoomin smiled slightly. "I didn't know you were so hungry!" The Hoomin dropped to his knees a few feet away from Linus. "I bet you aren't hungry anymore, that was a lot of food," The Hoomin whistled and looked around him.

As The Hoomin glanced behind him, he felt a nudge at his hand. Linus had laid himself next to The Hoomin and purred very softly.

Not wanting to scare Linus, The Hoomin slowly put his hand out as Linus bumped his head against him.

"I bet you've got a tummy ache," chuckled The Hoomin to himself.

The Hoomin softly petted his new friend to sleep, as Linus' purr grew louder.

Summertime & Spirit

Shawnee Zyskowski

The grass is long in the July hayfield, reaching towards the bright summer sun. The clover is short and soft with fat, purple blossoms that weigh down the ends until they curve back to the ground, like a yoga position. The Alfalfa is tall and thinner, with tiny leaves of deep emerald, and tinier flowers in violet clusters. The grass itself is thin and spindly, trembling like the legs of a colt, for those first unsure steps. It cool to the touch, soothing against warm flesh, despite the looming sun. The blades brush against each other, rustling like a wire brush whisked over a drumhead. The same sound they make over flesh, soft and pale, taunt against its pinpricks of attention. The Earth below is firm, with the slightest peaks of close shorn stalks, hardened and painful from seasons passed. They cover the ground like pikes around a castle, keeping small feet from nestled imprints.

There is always movement. The wind, little imp, lifts strands of green and mahogany both, rising in tandem in the primordial dance. Both alive and sheltering life, as the bugs, whose feet take oblivious purchase on blushing white and green both, leap in calculated choreography between the blades. The birds above dip and arc, wings stroking the blades like wind given life. They cry out in flight, mirroring the calls of the woman nearby. "Shawnee." Weaving together, in and out, both harmonic and dissonant. The sound rises and falls like the land. Green mounds, ocean waves transubstantiated to solid earth, forever frozen in their muted journey to the horizon.

Still the grass blows in tapered lines, toward the living sentinel of trees on the border; archangelus [1] of the field. O Soldier, against the crooked, wicked militant world Come to my help in earnest! [2] Poised they stand to silently trumpet, heralding in the new with the death of the old[3], phoenix from the ashes freed to dance in muted flames, a paradise found in what was lost. Their arms, long and lithe reach for the heavens, ever working to be closer to that light above. The leaves tremble under the wind's caress, rattling in time to the cacophony. They twirl on asymmetrical tracks, mottling rays of light in jovial juxtaposition to their supporting sentry.

A quiet, deep and profound takes hold, the symphony muted to a background buzz, overpowered by thick and bated breaths lightly stirring tender stalks. The grass twitches, taunt and expectant, breathing in time with children. Stone crunches, short and percussive, an urgent beating to a tense undercurrent. Slowly, they lose their force, tapering to a winding chant.

Then all is silent, save for the light creak of the grass as it bows in response to the wind.

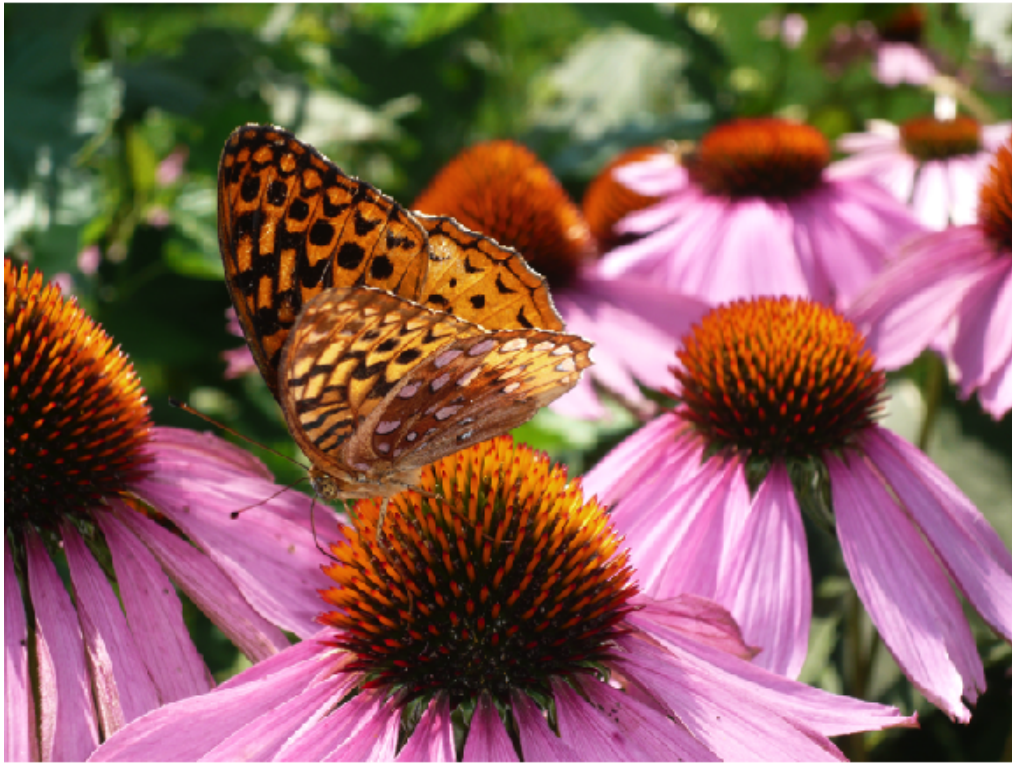
Then it all starts again, a chirping, rustling, crunching mess, as hoppers jump from stalk to stalk, finding home and sustenance both.

And the blue sky, serene as always, blankets them all.

[1] Latin for archangel (just so you know its not a spelling mistake)

[2] From the "Hymn to Archangel Michael", patron saint of protection, and guardian of the church: O angel! Bear, O Michael of great miracles, To the Lord my plaint. Hearest thou? Ask of forgiving God Forgiveness of all my vast evil. Delay not! Carry my fervent prayer To the King, the great King! To my soul Bring help, bring comfort At the hour of its leaving earth. Stoutly To meet my expectant soul Come with many thousand angels! O Soldier! Against the crooked, wicked, militant world Come to my help in earnest! Do not Disdain what I say! As long as I live do not desert me! Thee I choose, That thou mayst save my soul, My mind, my sense, my body. O thou of goodly counsels, Victorious, triumphant one, Angelic slayer of Antichrist!

[3] Reference to Mother Shipton's prophesy about the archangel Gabriel. "And as he blows his wondrous horn old worlds die and new be born." < span> Is it thought that Gabriel will blow his horn signifying the end of days and heralding in the final judgment day.



Following the trail of Ants: An examination of the work of E.O. Wilson

Samantha Kee

Edward Osborne Wilson was a born naturalist, in every sense of the word. As a child growing up in Alabama, he collected and studied species of snakes, flies, and the insect that became the basis of his life's work, ants. He made a goal to record every species of ant that could be found in Alabama—a childhood project that would eventually lead to his first scientific publication. By age 15, Wilson discovered a red, non-native ant in a local town in Alabama, and by the time he entered the University of Alabama, the fire ant had become a significant threat to the state's agriculture. The State of Alabama requested that Wilson carry out a survey of the ant's progress, and the study became Wilson's first published contribution to science. Continuing his work as a Junior Fellow of Harvard's Society of Fellows, E.O. Wilson eventually became the world's foremost expert on ants (E.O. Wilson biography). Through his fascination with some of Earth's tiniest insects, Wilson made a number of sizable contributions to the field of evolutionary biology. But more importantly, he developed a love for life—that is, the life that exists in all of the living creatures on Earth's surface—and dedicated much of his life to saving it.

E.O. Wilson is a biologist, specifically a myrmecologist, by training. Myrmecology is the study of ants, and Wilson has become the most respected authority on almost all aspects of ant anatomy, ecology, and social behavior. But he is not simply a scientist. "One of Wilson's great gifts is synthesizing vast amounts of information, often from diverse fields" (Tyson, 2008). Thus, he does not shy away from the cosmic religious and philosophical questions regarding, for instance, the possibility of a transcendent intelligence or the purpose of human existence. He does not separate the physical sciences from the life sciences from the social sciences. Rather, he seeks to incorporate numerous fields and perspectives in the pursuit of understanding human existence and how it came to be. Still, his views on human nature, religion, social behavior, and the environment are heavily influenced by his work as a scientist. Wilson has outlined these views in addition to his scientific achievements in over twenty books, two of which earned him the Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction. His extensive work as a biologist, theorist, conservationist, and author makes him one of the leading public intellectuals of our time.

As a biologist, one of Wilson's major contributions to science was his first book, *The Theory of Island Biogeography*. A collaborative effort with mathematician and ecologist Robert MacArthur (1910-1972), *The Theory of Island Biogeography* created a mathematical model for species diversity on islands based on the size and relative isolation of the island. The book established island biogeography as a new biological discipline and remains a standard in the field today. Of course, Wilson's own study of the ant species on islands of the South Pacific served as the model for this new theory, which earned him the 1990 Crafoord Prize awarded by the Royal Swedish Academy of sciences, one of the most highly regarded and coveted awards in the field of ecology.

Wilson's lifetime work with ants yielded a number of significant advances in the understanding of the social insects. Namely, Wilson shared in the discovery of the first Mesozoic fossils of ants and helped uncover the complex communications systems involving pheromones that exist among ants. Furthermore, his studies led to an understanding of how caste systems are determined in ant colonies and how these caste systems may have evolved. At the time a number of other discoveries were made regarding the social behavior of termites, bees, and wasps, which, with ants, are collectively classified as the social insects. The goal of Wilson's second major book, *The Insect Societies*, was to synthesize all of the known information on the social insects, including classification, anatomy, life cycle, behavior, and social organization. Wilson brought together all the ideas and supporting evidence that had been published in obscure journals and reinterpreted it in the context of evolutionary theory and modern biology, with implications for the young and budding fields of population biology and chemical biology. In this way, *The Insect Societies* established the foundation for future research in the field.

Wilson, however, recognized that the evolution of social systems in insects as discussed in *The Insect Societies* “provided a provocative backdrop for reflection on human sociality” (Wilson, 1993). The last chapter of the book, entitled “The Prospect of a Unified Sociobiology” gave Wilson the momentum he needed to put forth perhaps his most influential and controversial work, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*, a tome of 697 extra-large pages examining the social behavior of all animals from insects through humans. Wilson defines sociobiology as the systematic study of the biological basis of all behaviors. In his book, he explains social behaviors, including communication, aggression, dominance systems, sex, altruism, and parental care, in terms of adaptations that ultimately increase the survival and reproductive fitness of individuals within a group. Essentially, he reduces the spectrum of animal and human behaviors to its simplest unit—the gene. His reductionist perspective is evident in the opening passages: “In a Darwinist sense the organism does not live for itself. Its primary function is not even to produce other organisms; it reproduces genes, and it serves as their temporary carrier...the organism is only DNA’s way of making more DNA” (Wilson, *Sociobiology*, 3).

The major opposition to Wilson and sociobiology came in the political arena from extreme left and Marxist groups who argued that Wilson attempted to use biological evidence to justify the status quo. In a letter signed by Gould, Lewontin, and 15 other academics in the Boston area, Wilson is accused of joining “the long parade of biological determinists whose work has served to buttress the institutions of their society by exonerating them from responsibility for social problems.” It is easy to see why some might oppose Wilson so vehemently. Indeed, throughout the book, Wilson provides an underlying biological explanation for warfare and genocide, male aggression, sexual dimorphisms, and division of labor. But he did it without a political agenda. “I thought my views were self-evident” says Wilson, “but they weren’t acceptable in the ‘70s” (Reed, 1993). Wilson believed that sociobiology developed logically from evolutionary theory and the widespread evidence he had collected among insects, lower vertebrates, non-human primates, and humans. If evolutionary theory could be used to explain social behavior in lower animals, it followed that it could explain human behavior, as well. Wilson cleverly structures his book to reflect this logical flow of reasoning. But in the historical milieu of the 1970s, Wilson’s genetic determinism reeked of racism, sexism, and eugenics.

In response to the controversy, Wilson sought to more fully explain his views on human social behavior. In 1978, he published *On Human Nature*, which later won the Pulitzer Prize for General Non-Fiction. Consistent with *Sociobiology*, Wilson makes clear in the opening pages that humans are biological beings, and human nature results from the underlying genes. To some, this genetic determinist viewpoint suggests that development is confined to one single pathway determined by one set of genes. Wilson, however, makes an important distinction. “Rather than specify a single trait, human genes prescribe the capacity to develop a certain array of traits. In some categories of behavior, the array is limited and the outcome can be altered only by strenuous training—if ever. In others, the array is vast and the outcome easily influenced” (*On Human Nature*, 57). Here, Wilson addresses and affirms the old adage “Practice makes perfect” with respect to the influence of environment and training on behavior, but he maintains that the genes are important in establishing what traits and to what extent certain traits may develop. So, the newborn mind is not a *tabula rasa*, as John Locke suggested. Instead, humans are born with a set of genes that prescribes the capacity to evolve a vast, but still limited, set of behaviors depending on the society in which they are raised. In this way, Wilson understands and eloquently describes the relationship between genes and the environment that has been at the basis of the continuous nature vs. nurture debate.

Arthur Schopenhauer said, “All truth passes through three stages. First, it is ridiculed. Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as being self-evident.” Though Wilson’s theories on the evolution of human nature were fiercely resisted after the publication of *Sociobiology* in 1975—he even had water dumped on his head while defending sociobiology at the 1978 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science—*On Human Nature* seemed to quiet the opposition. Now, Wilson’s views are generally accepted throughout the scientific community. But accepting that human behavior is genetically based poses two important dilemmas, which Wilson addresses in *On Human Nature*. The first dilemma is that “the species lacks any goal external to its own biological nature” (3).

There is no self-fulfillment or actualization that transcends material existence. The second dilemma is that “innate sensors and motivators exist in the brain that deeply and unconsciously affect our ethical premises; from these roots, morality evolved as instinct” (5). As humans, then, we must choose which innate sensors and motivators to adhere to and which to ignore. The consequence of these dilemmas is the same—they inevitably degrade traditional religious and spiritual beliefs. Wilson suggests that the first dilemma can be assuaged by a union of the biological and social sciences and a deeper, introspective look at the evolution of the human mind as an “epiphenomenon of the neuronal machinery of the brain” (195). For Wilson, such an examination of the reality of humanity is an endeavor far more fulfilling than traditional religion. The second dilemma, according to Wilson, may provide more of an opportunity than a problem. For with the knowledge of the biology of ethics, human beings can “make possible the selection of a more deeply understood and enduring code of moral ethics”—a universal human rights—that is not dependent on rigid religious beliefs (196).

The fact remains, though, that approximately 80 percent of people in the world claim to be religious. Interestingly, E.O. Wilson was raised under the tradition of Southern Baptist Evangelical Christianity. At age 14, he made the decision to be baptized and was “born again.” So he, more than other scientists perhaps, recognizes the powerful influence that religion has. Some form of religion has evolved in every type of society from hunter-gatherer bands to democratic states. Thus, religion itself must have some adaptive value. Indeed, Wilson states that religious belief is an “ineradicable part of human nature” (On Human Nature, 169) that is “tribalist but necessary” (Paulson, 2006) in most societies. In college, Wilson came to realize that evolutionary theory explained everything that he loved in nature as a child. It made complete sense, and he was converted. For most, however, science and evolutionary theory is not a satisfying replacement for traditional religion. And for Wilson, that’s fine. He may believe that religion is wrong—it cannot explain the meaning of life on Earth—but he also understands that it is probably necessary for the successful functioning of any society. For now, the two worldviews can exist simultaneously side-by-side.

Wilson, however, is a synthesizer. In 1998, he describes in *Consilience* how the gap between the social sciences and the natural sciences must be bridged in order to solve humanity’s problems. According to Wilson, theology, philosophy, sociology and psychology are dependent on biology, which is dependent on chemistry, which is essentially dependent on physics; and all are necessary to understand the natural world and solve the problems it faces. Thus, he sees the potential of utilizing both science and religion to solve what he considers to be one of the most pressing matters of our time—the destruction of Earth’s biodiversity. Biodiversity refers to the number and variety of the species in a given ecosystem, biome, or even a whole planet and is often an indicator of how well an ecosystem functions. We are fully dependent on functioning ecosystems that are rich in biodiversity to filter our water, enrich our soils, and produce the air we breathe. Wild species provide food and resources, including a number of antibiotics and pharmaceuticals. Unfortunately, the number of species on the Earth is rapidly declining as a result of a combination of forces that Wilson summarizes with the acronym HIPPO: Habitat destruction, Invasive species, Pollution, Population, and Over-harvesting (Ted Talk). If humanity continues down this destructive path, half of the living species on Earth could be extinct or critically endangered by the end of the century.

In the midst of this catastrophe, Wilson makes a plea on behalf of his “constituency,” the ants and the million trillion other insects and tiny creatures he has loved his whole life (Ted Talk). He directs it to the two most powerful forces in society today—science and religion. Wilson believes that human beings are fundamentally inclined to care deeply about nature, as he eloquently explains in *Biophilia*. Consequently, the preservation of the natural world is an inherent part of human nature. In *The Creation*, Wilson makes an argument that human beings depend on nature, on the Creation, for their physical and spiritual well being. The bottom line is this: “The fate of the Creation is the fate of humanity” (14). The differences between religion and science should not come between the two forces in the pursuit of preservation of the natural world. In *The Creation*, Wilson writes to a Southern Baptist Minister, addressing the differences between science and religion and begging him to transcend these differences in the pursuit of a common goal:

For you, the glory of an unseen divinity; for me, the glory of the universe revealed at last. For you, the belief in God made flesh to save mankind; for me, the belief in Promethean fire seized to set man free. You have found your final truth; I am still searching. I may be wrong, you may be wrong. We may both be partly right. Does this difference in worldview separate us in all things?... I suggest that we set aside our differences in order to save the Creation. The defense of living Nature is a universal value (4).

As humans, we are aware of our place in nature and the impact we may have on it. Moreover, we are in a position to do something about it. E.O. Wilson has dedicated much of his time and effort into educating people about the human impact on the living Earth. He appeals to both science and religion in an effort to accomplish one goal: Save Creation. Preserve biodiversity and allow for the perpetuation of life on Earth.

At 82 years old, Wilson has fought the battle against human destruction of the natural world with a youthful passion that, no doubt, launched his life-long endeavor as a naturalist when he was just a boy growing up in Alabama. His love for all living things is the foundation on which he built his immensely successful career as a scientist, theorist, and conservationist. Wilson has been called “Darwin’s Natural Heir,” (Douglas, 2001) and there are undeniable similarities between the two. Both men were naturalists, and their simple observations of the natural world led to revolutionary ideas about the origin of species, including humans. Both were deeply religious before science provided a more fulfilling explanation for the diversity of the natural world they loved so much. The ideas of both men were fervently opposed. Finally, both will remain forever highly revered, yet controversial, figures in the history of science. Like Darwin’s finches have come to represent evolution in action, Wilson’s ants may become a symbol of sociobiology. And perhaps remembering what these little creatures have taught us so far will remind us of the vast amounts of knowledge still undiscovered in the natural world. Maybe, they will remind us of why the species of the Earth need saving, and Wilson’s fight to preserve the Creation may one day be won.

References:

Is science a ‘satisfying replacement’ for religion? A conversation with E.O. Wilson. Retrieved February 27, 2012.

Wilson, EO. (1978). *On Human Nature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wilson, EO. (1975). *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wilson, EO. (2006). *The Creation: An Appeal to Save Life on Earth*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton Company.



Memories at Birth

Matthew Wagner

You remember it, don't you? Surely, you haven't forgotten that place. You thought it was small, too small to house what you felt, right? That facility held so much for you, and I wager it still does, if not more now. At least, I'd place the wager once you tell me you remember what you found there.

You'd spent so long lamenting, so long regretting your foolish action: the one strike that pulled you out of competition for six painfully long weeks. How fitting that it was winter. The air froze right alongside your soul as you mindlessly trekked from that bedroom of yours to those classes you nearly gave up on. Day after day, week after week, you'd march, the skin on the back of your hand flaking, peeling as it was denied sunlight and air from under the cast, with the only comforting thought being that each second passed was a second closer to the removal of your plaster prison. 'These steel rods,' you wondered, 'will they stay there? How large will the scars I bear be?' Surely not as large as those left on your mind.

But that day at Yale would change things, wouldn't it? That would be the day you rose again, like the phoenix from its own ash. You were freed from your prison, and learning to walk again with eyes unclouded. Your teammates gave you the confidence you needed to stand, and with it, you declared before them that you'd never repeat your sin, that you would never put yourself before them. I wonder if you saw it whenever you looked in the mirror, that confidence that blazed in your eyes. I know I did. I saw it every time you swore on the blood that poured from your finger when the skin around it, having softened from the weeks it was sheltered, was blistered and torn by the rugged fibers of your hammer glove. You'd wipe it on the back, as if writing a seal or a testament to go along with your oath, wrap up your finger, and press onward.

The day finally came, and you were in such aspirations. Practice had treated you well, and your restless sleeps had ended, replaced with dreams of a return to success and the abandonment of your foolishness. Those eyes couldn't have been clearer. I remember watching you lace up your shoes for the first time at a meet in what felt like an eternity for you, sharing confidences with your teammates, your precious friends. You were ready, and they could see it. And so, you threw.

But you didn't throw well.

Your warm-ups had felt fine, and though it had still been chilly, you told yourself you were comfortable. The weight of the hammer moved differently now. Better. You could feel each wind and each orbit reaching their maximum radius, doing more of the work for you. Your hand tingled from time to time, but your adrenaline told you it was fine. So what was it?

Maybe it was the fact that you hadn't felt a real throwing surface for over 2 months.

Maybe it was the fact that you hadn't had the mindset of a competitor for just as long.

Maybe it was the sun catching your eye when it started to peer out from behind the clouds during warm-ups.

Maybe it was the sight of your high school rival's mother, set up in her collapsible chair with the tripod out, ready to catch her son's movements. Was she catching yours? It didn't matter. That damned camera made you wonder...

Maybe it was your coach's voice echoing in your mind after all of these thoughts, calling "You're thinking too much!"

Or maybe you just weren't as ready as you thought you'd be.

It didn't matter, because when you were done and had accumulated your three miserable distances, you became hate. That blazing confidence was substituted with such a murky, hazy darkness that it astonishes me that you were still able to see. Words became nothing to you, and the shoes on your feet reminded you that you had used them to fail so utterly. But can you remember what your teammates had said to you? You had to have heard them; they were standing right in front of you. They told you to give it time, and that you'd be back in business before your Conference meet.

But maybe all that hatred pulsating through your every capillary deafened you for the moment. As far as you were concerned, that circle you'd stood in was a concrete connection to the massive blunder you'd committed in punching the wall, and the steel cylinders holding the fence were another reminder that you were still in prison.

Everything your teammates had spoken of was irrelevant, because you knew that they wouldn't have had to say it if you hadn't been such a fool. There was such a violent storm brewing inside of you that I was nearly lost in it. How vivid the clouds were that had gathered behind your eyes, and the bolts that shook your heart as they crashed within your ribs. You felt something of it, I'm sure, but you probably couldn't say what. Were you even there enough mentally to know to call it hate? Or rage? Or anything? Whatever the case, something told you to move. Perhaps it was your body, or perhaps it was me. Something told you that you couldn't be near people right then, especially your teammates, those people who had done nothing but try to pull you up from your worst moments. You didn't want to burden them. You didn't want to poison them.

You moved.

You rose to your feet, but not as one who was ready to face the world. You clambered, your arms and legs working themselves that they could raise your torso, gain some sense of balance, and remove everything you were from that miserable airspace. You rose, and you walked, around the cage, past the greens near the Port-a-Potties, away from the track, and towards nothing. Perhaps you had some semblance of self in that slew of moments, because you stopped yourself from leaving the facility, and rested yourself against a tree.

The tree! Now you must remember that tree, especially if I'm right and it was you who picked it to be your place of rest. And how fitting, being that its branches loomed across a fence and draped over a handful of headstones on the other side in the cemetery. What did you feel, I wonder, as that cold, rigid bark pressed into your bare back, and the stones meshed with the gravel embedded themselves into your palms? Did you speak to anyone on the other side of that fence? A bird or two here, and a squirrel there may have distracted you for the best, but you were seeking something while you sat. Was it a comfort, a brace provided by that ancient oak? Or were you looking for something to siphon that deep well of anger from your heart?

Two hours you spent, searching, resting, reflecting. If those souls could've seen you, I wonder what they would have said, or what they'd have seen. Would they have known what it was you were longing for, the answer to a question you didn't know how to ask? I myself didn't know if I could help you, because I knew what you held in that moment wasn't a question. It was a yearning, a raw want embedded into your hands by the stones you clenched and threw, and by the scrapes on your shoulder blades when, after two hours, you got up, no longer an uncontrollable storm, but a focused gale. You hadn't found your answer, but you had found the will to search.

It was this will that brought you to cross paths with your teammate, another who, like you, had wracked himself with anguish at the aspect of competing poorly. You stood before each other at the foot of the gate to the baseball field, a separate complex built into the same grounds as the facility you had just conditioned yourself to loathe. It was grand, built in the same fashions as the Roman Coliseum, a fitting site for the reunion of two lost souls. Wouldn't you agree?

And, as powers of equal magnitudes will do when they clash, you and your teammate began to nullify one another. Can you remember what you spoke of? As I recall, you each poured yourselves out on the floor before the gates, like sprays of blood wrought from beneath a gladiator's hardened breastplate. But neither of you needed to strike. No, you had each done that to yourself plenty of times on your own. Now would be the time that your paths of blood would pool together, and your agonized hearts would blend, stronger united than they were apart.

Sure, the words you two had spoken weren't bolstering in their own respects, but as they harmonized from different bells, they resonated deeply within the both of you. The look on your face was one I'd seen only few times before then. It was as if you thought you'd been dreaming, but with each passing second, each passing sentence, you were coming to realize that the world around you and the words within you were real. You and he connected, your strife building a bridge. Your conversation transcended that moment, and seemed to search all dimensions of your lives, ranging from your futures to your futilities. In sharing these secrets, you found something you hadn't expected to, the magnet to guide your compass as you searched for the answer to your yearning, something that may have been there all along, but it hadn't been as vivid as it was in the past. It revealed itself as you and your teammate, having poured forth all the doubts, worries, and fears your hearts housed, submerged your dented goblets into the well of your blood, and toasted with it before the gates, invoking again the drive to recover and reclaim. Do you remember it now, what you rediscovered in that place that day?

You found trust.

She
Dan Otzel

Chapter One
College

Three years.

Three years of our lives spent almost exclusively with each other.

Three years in each other's arms and three years in each other's hearts.

The best three years of my life.

It began innocently enough. We were freshman in college. It was a small school in southwestern Connecticut. Bridgeport, Connecticut, to be exact. I was there because I couldn't get in anywhere else. I longed to go to a big school, where I could get lost amongst the masses of do-gooders, enjoy some cocktails and do my drugs. Instead, I was there.

She was there because She craved the attention of professors who would teach her about psychology and mold her for life and a career.

It was the first night of school not of classes but the first day that freshman could move in. After all the rap and emo posters were hung and the parents departed, a few of the guys on my floor and I made our way to the cafeteria, the armory that held the greasy food that would contribute to our "Freshman 15."

In came the upperclassman, immediately soliciting the fresh fish to come to a party at a house the three of them shared.

"Hey guys," the leader said, "you want to get your drink on tonight?"

Drink on?

"Hell, yes," the four of us almost screamed in unison.

We must have looked pretty damn cool as we sat there eating our fried chicken strips.

They gave us directions and went on to the next table (maybe we didn't look that cool).

We arrived at the house at 9: 0. The party started at 9, but we wanted to show up fashionably late.

No one noticed.

We entered the house with the strange-looking emblem on the door. Although, we later found out that this was a fraternity house and they were looking for ready recruits, we never discussed it. We wanted to believe that we were someone special.

As I was handed my red cup of stale beer, I glanced to my right. I'll never know why I looked in that direction, but I'll never forget what I saw.

Chapter Two
She

She was stunning.

She had full-flowing blonde hair that would sometimes, unfortunately, hide her eyes. Those eyes, they were deeper than the ocean and the color blue that poets write about and, although they won't admit it, all guys dream about. Her long, slender body was covered in a golden-brown glaze that featured her perky, 18-year-old, "you-don't-know-what-you're-doing-yet," breasts. The end of her shirt displayed just enough of the smooth stomach that glided seamlessly down into her long legs.

She came to Bridgeport from a small town in Connecticut. She wanted to be in the big city. I would always chuckle at that. Bridgeport?

Of the few kids she went to high school with, many had developed a pretty healthy OxyContin addiction. She was at this institute of higher education to major in psychology and, hopefully, retire back to her small town and counsel its troubled youth.

She had it all mapped out. She would begin her own practice, marry one of the guys from her high school that had managed to stay sober, buy a house and have some kids. It was almost enviable, the way She had it "all figured out."

But, it wasn't a pipedream. She was smart, but wasn't brash about it and never intimidated anyone with her acumen. She was funny, but not in a false way. She could charm the Queen of England with her wit and would sometimes laugh at a locker room joke or two, but never three. She was caring, but it wasn't a front, She genuinely cared. For me, for her family, for her friends, for the afflicted, even for animals.

She was, as they say, the total package.

Chapter Three

Me

I was the typical 18-year-old kid from the city New York City. I came to Bridgeport; well, because I had no other options. I applied to one school UConn. I wanted to get the hell out of the city and UConn seemed like one giant farm. When I couldn't get in, this place was my last resort. It had a reputable psychology department, but that was about it. Hell, I didn't know what I wanted to major in and no clue of what I wanted to do. I hadn't giving it much thought, or any thought, really.

High school was a blast. I played football and baseball, and was pretty good at both. I was fairly popular, as most of the jocks were, and had even managed to score with two of the better looking females at the school.

More so than being an athlete, though, my high school years would end up being defined by my legendary partying. In my affluent neighborhood, there was no shortage of house parties, in which I was a staple.

I started drinking and smoking weed my freshman year. I got into coke my junior year, and was willing to try anything, except a needle, by the time I graduated. My substance usage never got out of control, though. I was in it, at first, for purely fitting in and being considered cool. Later, I began to enjoy it.

I came to college looking to drink on the weekends and use when the opportunity presented itself. I did plan on studying and doing the best I could, without killing myself.

I just didn't factor in a broad.

Chapter Four

Clich

I'm not going to say love at first sight, but seeing her for the first time was, well, clich d.

But, the objective that night was not to meet a girl, fall in love, settle down, and all that shit. We were there on business. We were freshman at an upper class party a party that we had been invited to (let's just leave it at that invited to the hell with the semantics). We were there to drink shitty beer, tell people where we were from, make connects, and hit on girls with no intention of taking them home or even ever seeing them again. I knew why we were there, but after five beers and two joints, I had a new agenda.

She was in the corner with two friends, one fat and one who looked anorexic. Ah, the juxtaposition. But, to be honest, I don't know if Megan Fox could have made her look bad on this night. She was wearing skin-tight jeans, accentuating a flawless ass, and a simple pink tank top, showing just enough to make my eyes bug out and just a little to leave me wanting more.

As I mustered the gumption to approach, paying no attention to much else, despite my roommate Rob's prodding to watch a keg stand, I meticulously debunked my whole philosophy on girls.

I always believed that men and women were put on this earth to compliment the earth's beauty. Looking at her, though, I knew I was wrong.

As I stood there, slamming down whatever was in my cup, I knew I had never seen anything matching the beauty radiating from the corner of that smoke and noise filled room.

Chapter Five

Foundation

"Hey, how are you?" I said to her, displaying my total lack of game (both girls in high school threw themselves at me), "I'm Jim." I thought Jimmy, which is what everyone called me, was too casual for this encounter.

She stated her name.

“So, where you from?” I asked, not knowing what else to say.

She stated her hometown.

“How do you like your first college party?”

She said she was enjoying it.

This frantic search for words went on for five agonizing minutes until, finally, we had finished our beers. I asked her if I could get her another beer and She obliged to walk with me to the keg.

We chatted for the next hour or so about everything under the sun. I found out about her past, her well-planned future, and coming to age in Connecticut.

As the night drew to an end and her floor mates came to rescue, I mean, escort her home in a group (man, chicks love their groups) I threw it out there:

“So you think I could get your number?”

She put it in my phone.

That was a Friday.

I tried to wait, but couldn't. I was officially infatuated. So, I broke down and called her on Sunday. We talked for about two hours and it was glorious. Words flowed from my soul without provocation.

We continued to build a relationship via smart phones until the next Saturday night, when we both planned to escort each other to yet another mysterious frat party.

For two days, I played the scenario out in my head. I would make her feel for me what I felt for her. I just wasn't quite sure what that was.

Chapter Six

Love

0

We fell in love.

The week after our second party together, we went on a real date. We went for a cup of coffee, joining every hipster and author in Bridgeport at a local coffee shop.

That night, we talked...a lot.

We went on three more dates, one on a Wednesday. When you go on a Wednesday date to Bridgeport's finest restaurant, you know things are going well. After dinner, She asked me about our status.

“Well, what do you think?” I asked.

She said that She thought we were a couple. That was fine with me, as long as we could keep spending time together. She called me boyfriend and that was that.

Over the course of that first semester, we fell more in love each day. Over Christmas break, we talked on the phone every day. The next semester we took 4 of our 5 classes together. Over summer break, we officially told everyone in our respective home towns that we had met “someone.” The love fest continued through our sophomore and junior years.

One year, She spent Christmas at my house. My family fell in love with her easygoing, yet, driven demeanor. Her ultra-strict parents even accepted me for one Christmas, liking me better than any boy her town had to offer.

We shared two spring breaks together, one in Daytona Beach and one in Cancun. We got an apartment together our junior year, much to the shock of her parents, and spent every waking moment together.

We were so in love.

She even began planning our future in that drug-infested home town of hers. As long as She was with me, I didn't care where we were.

Chapter Seven

It

Yeah, it was just another boring and uneventful love story.

We woke up next to each other, went to class together, studied together, ate together, and partied together. When we got home, we would make love, fall asleep in each other's arms, and start the magnificent process again the next day.

She even weathered the storm on one visit when her mother caught me smoking a joint in their backyard. Her parents were pissed, but She threatened to leave forever if they didn't forgive me.

They forgave me.

Then, it happened.

She was out for a girl's night out and I was over Rob's watching the Rangers game. He gave me a pill to take with my Bud Light.

She frowned on that. I could drink and occasionally smoke my weed, but other drugs, even coke and especially pills were out of the question.

Hell, I thought, She will never find out. And, I could always crash on Rob's couch. I didn't give it much thought, not even what it was I took.

I did make it home, because the next morning I awoke to her sitting on the corner of the bed holding something up and crying. I rubbed the sleep/drugs/booze out of my eyes and saw an empty condom wrapper in her hand.

Wait, I thought, we didn't use condoms.

She asked me what happened, but I had no answers.

I felt the words "I'm sorry" get stuck in my throat, but I couldn't choke it out. She left, crying, but I said nothing.

I remembered nothing.

Chapter Eight

Gone

For the next week, I tried to piece that night together.

She never came home and I skipped all my classes.

Apparently, I took a whole bar of anax and experienced a functional blackout. Meaning, I spent the night as another doped-up college kid, with the same pressing desires and horribly rash reasoning. Eventually, I passed out and had no recollection of the night. I didn't remember anything after taking that goddamn pill. I was told three large males in a Cadillac dropped me off at my place around midnight, two hours after the Ranger game ended. The temptress left an hour later and She got home an hour after that, only to find the evidence on the floor next to the bed. She tried to confront me that night, but She couldn't awake me from my drug-induced slumber.

There were no three males, Cadillac, or temptresses of that description at our small school. "What the hell happened?" I kept asking myself.

The whole school found out what I had done and I got nasty looks everywhere I went, even from the guys. In the eyes of the school, we were the perfect love story and I screwed it up.

I didn't know what I had done, but knew I had done it.

I couldn't tell my parents. I couldn't tell my friends back in the City. I confided in my brother, a lawyer in Manhattan. He invited me to a Yankee game and, thankfully, I got the hell out of Bridgeport.

Somebody tipped her off, because when I got back the next day, She was gone and I mean gone. Not only did She move out, but She took all her stuff and removed all the pictures in which we shared the canvas. The clothes and hats I had bought her were placed gently on the bed we once shared. Along with the ring, the symbol of my unequivocal love for her.

She was gone and I mean gone.

Chapter Nine

Bawls of Blood

What could I do?

I tried calling for about a week, but to no avail.

I showed up at the place where I thought She was staying, but two of her girlfriends screamed at me to leave. I went back, but they were ready for me. Her friend's football player boyfriend and two of his buddies were there waiting.

I got the hell out of there pretty quick.

I called her parents, not to explain what I did, just too...well, I don't know why, I was desperate.

When I finally went back to class, it was our last semester and I did need to graduate (my parents loved me but had had it with paying my tuition), She was there, accompanied by more football players. She didn't even know any football players, but I was public enemy number one on that campus. I also don't think it hurt that She appeared hot and vulnerable.

We graduated a month after the incident, and I knew I would never see or hear from her again.

If you're asking yourself if I should have kept trying to win her back, the answer is no.

She had given me everything: her love, her time, her body, her soul. I had done something She forbade me to do and as a result of that, I did something unspeakable.

I felt bad. I felt lonely. I felt confused.

But the worst part?

I had hurt her, I had hurt her bad. Nothing in my life, in a thousand lives, would ever compare to that feeling.

I had dedicated three years to protecting her. I would have laid down my life before seeing her hurt. The pain that She felt at the core of her world, I had caused that.

That's why I stopped trying to reconcile. I would have to stare into those vast blue eyes and see the tears turn into blood.

I had hurt her my precious Hannah.

Chapter Ten

Hope

After college, I went to law school in California. I wanted to get as far away from Bridgeport as possible. In fact, I have never stepped foot back in Connecticut since I graduated.

Since the legal job market was so bleak out there, I came back to the City to work for my brother, who had taken over his firm a year earlier.

I think about Hannah all the time. I have never heard from her since, nor have I tried to contact her. Mostly, I think about how her life turned out. Did she follow that roadmap she came to Bridgeport with? I try not to get into details, though. The thought of her with another guy still makes me sick. I just focus on the good times we shared together and wonder when we will love again.

I often find myself ask questions about what connects the past to the future. It certainly can't be the present. Look around, the present is so messed up, it couldn't connect Legos. No, I happen to believe that it is hope. Hope is the purest natural resource in the world. Mankind has always dreamed for a better tomorrow, I think that's why I'm writing this bullshit. Hope reminds us of all that was good and could be again.

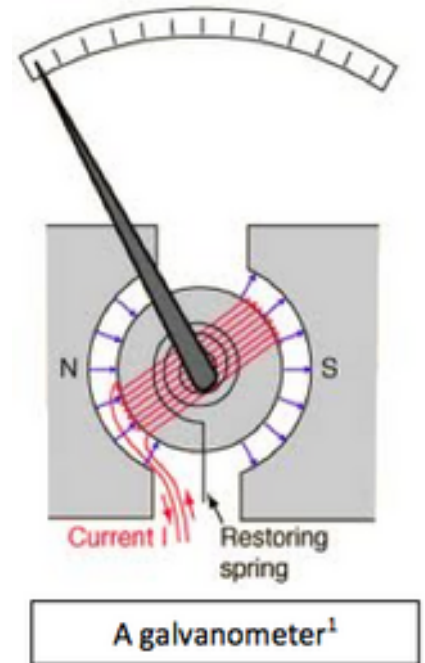
Well, I know what was good in my life, and I just hope She is happy.

The History of Maxwell's Equations

By Lindsay Guilmette

James Clerk Maxwell was born in 1831 in Scotland to a family of Fellows of the Royal Society, an elite organization of the top scientists of all disciplines in Great Britain (The Royal Society, 2011). Maxwell began his academic career quite early. He presented his first paper "Oval Curves" to the Royal Society of Edinburgh at age sixteen and entered graduate school at Cambridge University at age nineteen. After graduation, he was a fellow and professor at a variety of colleges in the United Kingdom. Maxwell was inducted as a Fellow of The Royal Society of Edinburgh at age 30. After a fruitful career, James Maxwell passed away at the age of 48 of stomach cancer, which was oddly the same cause and timing of his mother's death when Maxwell was eight years old (Forfar, 1995).

In 1819, twelve years before Maxwell was born, the field of electromagnetism was born. Hans Christian Oersted of Denmark had suspected that electricity and magnetism were related for some time and was finally able to create some evidence for it. In his experiment, Oersted held a wire above a compass. When a current travelled through the wire, he noticed that the needle of the compass moved. This launched an investigation of how electricity and magnetism are related. André Ampère was so excited after learning of Oersted's discovery that he created a rough mathematical theory that described it in one week in 1820, and published his finished equation in 1821 (Peters, 2000). Ampère's equation becomes the fourth of Maxwell's famous equations. A year later, the first galvanometer was made, which was greatly beneficial to the measurement of electric current (The Encyclopedia Americana Corporation, 1918). A galvanometer relies on the findings of Oersted's experiment: when a current travels through a coil, a nearby magnetized needle is deflected. As was found after Oersted, the needle is deflected in proportion to the strength of the current (Florida State University, Los Alamos National Laboratory, University of Florida, 2011).



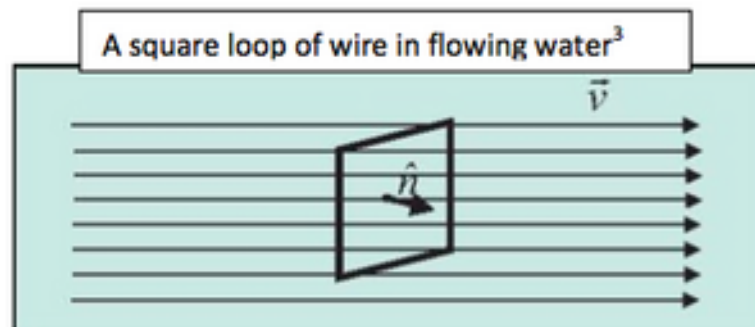
The most productive scientist in electromagnetism before Maxwell was Michael Faraday, who was actually a chemist. In the course of his research, which lasted from 1811 to 1855 (The Encyclopedia Americana Corporation, 1918), he produced over 16,000 perfectly organized entries in his laboratory notes (Peters, 2000). The results of his experiments formed the basis for Maxwell's electromagnetic theory. Although Faraday had an amazing physical intuition that guided him through his experiments to successfully create nearly a complete model of electromagnetic phenomena, since he was not at all a mathematician, he was only able to describe this model in words and did not unify his results into a theory (The Encyclopedia Americana Corporation, 1918). Since the physicists of the time were mathematically trained, they hardly paid Faraday's results any attention. They saw the lack of mathematics as a lack of sophistication (Hunt, 1981).

Although Faraday completed an amazing number of experiments, there are two series that are most important to concretely understand his contributions to Maxwell's theory. The first set of experiments allowed Faraday to discover the principle of electromagnetic induction. He wound two separate wires around a wooden bobbin and insulated them from each other. To one he connected a battery, and to the other he connected a galvanometer. He discovered that by breaking or reconnecting the circuit connected to the battery, a current of the opposite direction was induced in the other wire. This amazing discovery forms the basis of any device that uses electricity, including telephones, which were invented later in the 19th century. Faraday also found that simply moving a magnet closer or farther away from a closed circuit would induce a current (The Encyclopedia Americana Corporation, 1918). This discovery allowed Faraday to design and build a generator as well as the first transformer and the first electric motor. When asked by a politician what the use of this work was, Faraday replied "at present, I don't know, but one day you will be able to tax them" (Peters, 2000, p. 6). Electromagnetic induction is a truly incredible phenomenon that redefined how the sources of electricity were thought of. The second experiment is actually one that many elementary school children carry out in their classrooms.



It involves spreading iron filings on a surface and simply placing a magnet on them. This causes the iron to be moved by the magnetic field in a pattern that loops from one end of the magnet to the other. Faraday saw this pattern and thought that these "lines of force," as he called them, must be the key to electromagnetism. When he induced an electric current in a wire with a magnet, he saw this line of force curving around the wire, as we now know is the case.

The first paper that James Maxwell published after earning his graduate degree was a 75 page analysis of Faraday's concept of "lines of force" published in 1855 and was suitably titled "On Faraday's "Lines of Force" (Forfar, 1995). Maxwell translated Faraday's ideas into mathematics. Maxwell created vectors to describe the main players of electromagnetism: "E, the electric field intensity, H, the magnetic field intensity, B, the magnetic flux density, and I the electric current density, E and H are forces and B and I are fluxes (lines of force) produced by the forces" (Peters, 2000, p. 9). A way to picture flux is to imagine having a square loop of wire in a flowing river. The flux of the velocity of the water would be like considering how much water will flow through the loop. The flux of an electric field is proportional to the number of electric field lines that go through such a loop (Sciolla, 2004).



Notice that Maxwell had transformed Faraday's "lines of force" into mathematical concepts that we still use today. Fields are used in many disciplines across mathematics. The first mention of a field in Maxwell's A Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism was of an electric field, which he described as

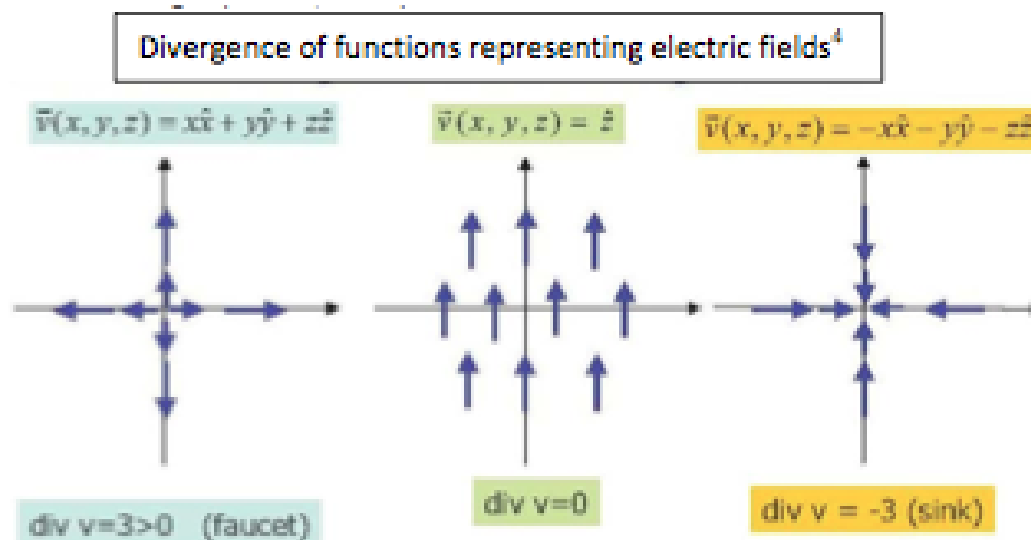
"the portion of space in the neighborhood of electrified bodies, considered with reference to electric phenomena. It may be occupied by air or other bodies, or it may be a so-called vacuum, from which we have withdrawn every substance which we can act upon with the means at our disposal. If an electric body be placed at any part of the electric field it will, in general, produce a sensible disturbance in the electrification of the other bodies" (Maxwell, 1892, pp. 47-48)

With these vectors, Maxwell created countless equations to describe his electromagnetic theory (Maxwell, 1892). Despite the publishing of A Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism, which was a handbook starting from square one for everything one could know about electromagnetism at Maxwell's time, not much attention was paid to Maxwell and his revolutionary ideas. It was not until Heinrich Hertz found experimental evidence for Maxwell's concept of a field in 1887 by discovering electromagnetic waves in space did the scientific community begin to look at Maxwell's theory.

Before we explore the basic equations of Maxwell's theory of electromagnetism, we must learn two operations. First recall that a derivative df/dx of a function f is the proportion of the change in $f(x)$ and the change in x : $df = (df/dx) dx$. The proportion df/dx is called a partial derivative because it is used when a function is of more than one variable and is simply the derivative of that function with respect to x , treating all other variables as constants. When a function is of more than one variable, such as $f(x,y,z)$, we have $df = (df/dx)dx + (df/dy)dy + (df/dz)dz$.

The del operator, ∇ , is a pseudo vector of the partial derivatives of f: $\nabla \equiv \frac{\partial}{\partial x} \hat{x} + \frac{\partial}{\partial y} \hat{y} + \frac{\partial}{\partial z} \hat{z}$ and is used in the two following operations (Sciolla, 2004).

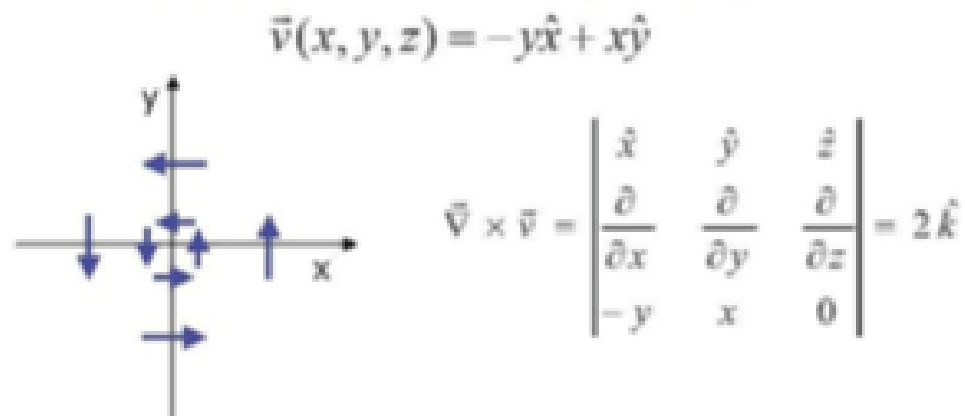
The first operation is called divergence, and is denoted by $\nabla \cdot \mathbf{v} \equiv \frac{\partial v_x}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial v_y}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial v_z}{\partial z}$ where \mathbf{v} is a function of x , y , and z . This operation uses the dot product. Recall that the dot product of two vectors $\mathbf{v} = (u, w, r)$ and $\mathbf{q} = (a, b, c)$ is $\mathbf{v} \cdot \mathbf{q} = ua + wb + rc$ and yields a scalar. The divergence of a function represents how much a functions "spreads around a point" (Sciolla, 2004). If $\mathbf{v}(x, y, z)$ represents an electric field, the the divergence of the first function below shows that any electrons in the field are being repelled away from the origin (Sciolla, 2004).



The second operation is called curl, which describes how much a function "curls around a point," (Sciolla, 2004) and is denoted by $\nabla \times \mathbf{v}$. An example of the calculation of the curl of a function representing a magnetic field $\mathbf{v}(x, y, z)$ is shown below. The determinant of the matrix below is a pseudo cross product:

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{v} = \hat{x} \left(\frac{\partial}{\partial y} 0 - \frac{\partial}{\partial z} x \right) - \hat{y} \left(\frac{\partial}{\partial x} 0 - \left(-\frac{\partial}{\partial z} y \right) \right) + \hat{z} \left(\frac{\partial}{\partial x} x - \left(-\frac{\partial}{\partial y} y \right) \right)$$

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{v} = \hat{x}(0 - 0) - \hat{y}(0 - (-0)) + \hat{z}(1 - (-1)) = 2\hat{z} \text{ which is sometimes written as } 2\hat{k}.$$



This is a vortex: non zero curl!

The curl of a function representing a magnetic field⁵

In 1861, Maxwell published the beginnings of his famous equations. It was while developing these equations that he discovered that light is similar to electricity and magnetism. Since these equations were of a different form than we see them today, to better appreciate Maxwell's distillation of Faraday's theory, we will look at the form in which mathematician and physicist Oliver Heaviside wrote them a couple of decades after the publication of Maxwell's treatise. Two are most notable (Darrigol, 2005):

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{E} = \mathbf{M} - \frac{D\mathbf{B}}{Dt}$$

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{H} = \mathbf{j} + \frac{D\mathbf{D}}{Dt}$$

where \mathbf{M} is the magnetic current, which describes how a magnetic field seems to flow from one pole to the other, \mathbf{j} is the electrical current, and $\frac{D\mathbf{D}}{Dt}$ is the displacement current, which is basically a potential for electric current to flow. The remaining variables are described above.

Electric potential was a new concept that grew to change electromagnetic theory completely. It was Faraday that had first thought of this paradigm but could not express it mathematically (Peters, 2000). Maxwell actually created a new form of derivative in order to achieve this expression: $\frac{D\mathbf{Y}}{Dt}$ is the convective derivative defined by

$\frac{D\mathbf{Y}}{Dt} = \frac{\partial \mathbf{Y}}{\partial t} - \nabla \times (\mathbf{v} \times \mathbf{Y}) + \mathbf{v}(\nabla \cdot \mathbf{Y})$, where \mathbf{v} is the velocity of "the states" (Darrigol, 2005, p. 2) which are \mathbf{E} , \mathbf{H} , \mathbf{D} , and \mathbf{B} .

Since \mathbf{D} is electric flux, $\frac{D\mathbf{D}}{Dt}$ represents varying electric current potential. This and $\frac{D\mathbf{B}}{Dt}$ were added by Maxwell to the original equations written by Heinrich Lenz (the first) and Andre Ampere (the second) (Darrigol, 2005, p. 2).

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{D} = \rho$$

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{B} = 0$$

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{E} = -\frac{D\mathbf{B}}{Dt}$$

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{H} = \mathbf{j} + \frac{D\mathbf{D}}{Dt}$$

The first equation relates electric flux to the volumetric charge density, ρ . The second equation says that a magnetic field does not diverge because there are no monopoles (Sciolla, 2004). The third equation summarizes the result from Faraday's electromagnetic induction: "the voltage induced in a circuit was proportional to the time rate of change of magnetic flux through the circuit" (Peters 2000, p. 9). The fourth is from Ampere: "the magnetic field in a closed loop around a current was, in fact, equal to the current through the loop" (Peters, 2000, p. 9).

The modern partial derivative version of these equations is very similar, but constants have been added to some terms in order to conform to standard systems of unit. Here we will look at the version in cgs (centimeters, grams, seconds - cgs was actually first introduced a year after the publication of Maxwell's treatise (Wolfram Research Products, 2007)):

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{E} = 4\pi\rho$$

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{B} = 0$$

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{E} = -\frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t}$$

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{B} = \frac{4\pi}{c} \mathbf{j} + \frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \mathbf{E}}{\partial t}$$

where c is the speed of light (Sciolla, 2004).

Today, we also sometimes find it convenient to use Maxwell's equations in their integral form. The following are in SI units (Flower, 2009):

$$\int E \cdot dA = q/\epsilon_0$$

$$\int B \cdot dA = 0$$

$$\oint E \cdot dl = -\frac{d}{dt} \left(\int B \cdot dA \right)$$

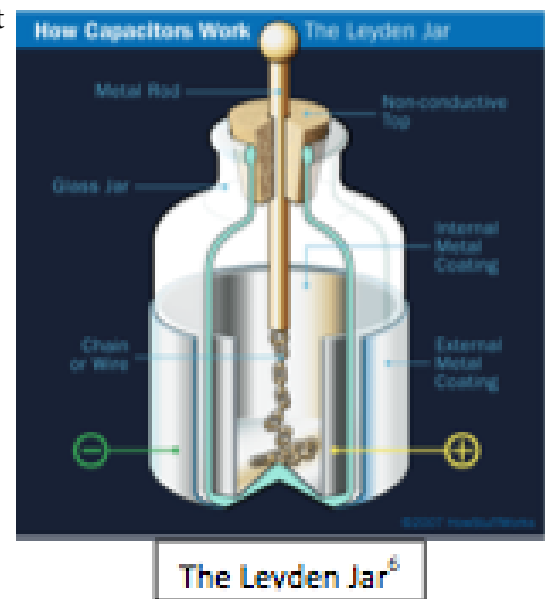
$$\oint B \cdot dl = \mu_0 \left(I + \frac{d}{dt} (\epsilon_0 \cdot \int E \cdot dA) \right)$$

where q is the electric charge, ϵ_0 the electric constant, and μ_0 is the magnetic constant. The first equation says that "the integral of the outgoing electric field over an area enclosing a volume equals the total charge inside" (Folwer, 2009). The second is still another way of saying that there are no magnetic monopoles. The third and fourth equations have a path integral that simply denotes integration around a closed path. IN this case, that path is usually a wire. The left side of the equation "gives the totally voltage change around the circuit, which is generated by a varying magnetic field threading through the circuit" (Fowler, 2009). The fourth equation "gives the total magnetic force around a circuit in terms of the current through the circuit, plus any varying electric field through the circuit (that's the displacement current)" (Folwer, 2009).

Maxwell's equations are amazing because they summarize the fundamental phenomena related to electromagnetism in four concise equations. However, his equations had more of an effect on electromagnetism than additional convenience. Maxwell extended, connected and translated Faraday's concepts of electromagnetism into a full -fledged mathematical theory, which put it on the table for comparison to the leading electromagnetic theory at the time. We will compare these theories using the Leyden Jar, a device still used in Maxwell's time, as pictured. The Leyden Jar has two coatings of a conductive metal that

do not touch each other, one on the inside of an insulating glass, and the other on the outside. The inner coating is charged with a metal rod and then the metal rod is removed. When a scientist touches the outside of the jar, the scientist receives an electric shock (Wolfram Research Products, 2007). This surprised scientists because they thought only the inner coating had been charged. The differing explanations of this phenomenon encompass the heart of the difference between Maxwell's theory and the leading electromagnetic theory (The Encyclopedia Americana Corporation, 1918).

This prevalent theory was called "action at a distance". This theory assumes that insulators completely block electric current. Therefore, the reason that a charge could be received from the outer coating is the electricity works at a distance, as gravity does. While electricity was building up on the inner coating, an electricity of an opposite kind was attracted to the outer coating. Therefore, when touched, the outer coating could deliver a shock (The Encyclopedia Americana Corporation, 1918).



Maxwell saw the phenomenon of the Leyden Jar and was inspired by Faraday's "lines of force." Maxwell expanded upon Faraday's conception of electricity to assert that not only does electricity travel along lines of force, but also requires a medium. He saw insulators such as glass as being resistive to electric current but not immune to it. He saw the process of charging the inner coating to be like displacing electricity in a way that you would displace a string by stretching it away from its equilibrium. The resistive force of the glass blocks the electricity from returning to its equilibrium until the charging force overcomes it. In the spring example, the charging force would be the force of the string and the resistive force would be the force of the hands that are pulling the spring apart. When the force of the spring overcomes the force exerted by the hands, the spring snaps back to equilibrium. This is how Maxwell saw the phenomenon of the Leyden jar: when the charging force overcomes the resistive force, the electricity snaps back into equilibrium through an electric current (The Encyclopedia Americana Corporation, 1918). This change in conception would greatly simplify the mathematics involved in the study of electromagnetism as well as more accurately explain electromagnetic phenomenon (Darrigol, 2005).

It is amazing how quickly electromagnetism developed in such a short time from its beginnings with Oersted's experiments in 1819. However, this quick pace was not just coincidence, but was related to the cultural changes that Great Britain was going through during the 19th century. During the mid 19th century, the idea that the principle of free trade would bring peace and prosperity began to percolate through European society. For some time, the dominating economic philosophy had been mercantilism, which was a doctrine of strict protection of a state's resources, high tariffs on trade, and colonial domination. These ideas of the benefits of free trade in the intellectual culture had a place in the scientific culture as well. Rather than working independently on one's reputation and theory, scientists began to see the benefits of developing upon their peer's ideas and discussing the relative merit of scientific theories as a community (Turner, 1980). Maxwell spent the majority of his work in electromagnetism simply converting Faraday's theory into mathematics, but the combination of their respective talents created an incredible contribution to science. It was this idea of free trade that made Maxwell want to share his theory with Europe, not just to dominate the field, but to peacefully offer a comparison to the leading theory (Forfar, 1995). During the mid 19th century, the British scientific culture also fully equated society's progress with scientific progress. They had seen science create the telegraph, seen the telegraph revolutionize communication with European society, and seen the scientific advancement of the telegraph continue to revolutionize society. They saw the power of science to change the world (Turner, 1980). For physics specifically, it was the power of the telegraph that was a major motivation to understand electromagnetism completely to advance communication (Maxwell, 1892).

It was because of this belief that scientific advancement was important for society's progress that scientists began wanting to influence public decisions and have public funding. However, the people who were in the public forefront at the time, politicians and businessmen, dismissed the idea that scientific work had anything to do with their work. In an attempt to win society over, many scientists began to emphasize how important science was to the security, economic competency, and the stability of Great Britain. This strategy was drawing on the fact that British science and British politics and business had a common enemy: Germany. By the late 19th century, Germany became an industrial threat to Great Britain's economic dominance, and was slowly becoming a military threat as well. Germany had also been a thorn in the sides of British scientists for years. Germany's public funding and public recognition of their scientists' research had made German science flourish in the 19th century, and was much more influential and prosperous than British science (Turner, 1980). In fact, the leading theory of electromagnetism, "action at a distance," was developed in Germany and it was these German scientists who looked down upon and refused to acknowledge Maxwell's theory. Frustrated with the lack of response of the scientific community to his paper "On Faraday's Lines of Force," Maxwell transformed his comprehensive theory into twelve equations, a great feat even for today's pace of scientific progress (Forfar, 1995). However, the German scientists still refused to relinquish their monopoly on electromagnetism, and simply dismissed Maxwell's theory as something that just works out on paper (Turner, 1980). Oliver Heaviside's editing of Maxwell's equations began to turn the tide, but it was not until Heinrich Hertz, a German physicist, demonstrated in 1887 the existence of a field of electromagnetism by finding electromagnetic waves in space that German scientists began to accept Maxwell's theory (Hunt, 1983).

Maxwell's theory of electromagnetism was revolutionary. It completely changed the study of electromagnetism as well as European society. After Hertz discovered electromagnetic waves in space, the wireless telegraph was invented, which made fast communication possible across oceans for the first time. Maxwell's theory also made long-distance electrical waves effective, something the "action at a distance" theory was not able to do (Hunt, 1983). Still today, we owe an enormous amount of technology to Maxwell's theory of electromagnetism and his perseverance through cultural obstacles to advocate his talent of mathematical interpretation.

References

- Darrigol, O. (2005). *The Genesis of the Theory of Relativity*. Retrieved October 12, 2011, from Séminaire Poincaré: <http://www.bourbaphy.fr/darrigol2.pdf>
- Florida State University, Los Alamos National Laboratory, University of Florida. (2011). *Galvanometer*. Retrieved December 6, 2011, from Magnet Lab: National High Magnetic Field Laboratory: <http://www.magnet.fsu.edu/education/tutorials/java/galvanometer/index.html>
- Forfar, D. O. (1995, July). *James Clerk Maxwell: Maker of Waves*. Retrieved November 30, 2011, from James Clerk Maxwell Foundation: http://www.clerkmaxwellfoundation.org/Maker_of_Waves.pdf
- Fowler, M. (2009, May). *Maxwell's Equations and Electromagnetic Waves*. Retrieved November 30, 2011, from Galileo and Einstein: http://galileo.phys.virginia.edu/classes/109N/more_stuff/Maxwell_Eq.html
- Heaviside, O. (1893). *Electromagnetic Theory*. Boston: "The Electrician" printing and publishing company, limited.
- Hunt, B. J. (1983, September). "Practice vs. Theory": The British Electrical Debate, 1888-1891. *Isis*, 74(3), 341-355.
- Maxwell, J. C. (1892). *A Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Peters, R. A. (2000, April 5). *A Brief Outline of the History of Electromagnetism*. Retrieved October 12, 2011, from Richard Alan Peters II, Ph.D.: http://www.vuse.vanderbilt.edu/~rap2/papers/em_history.pdf
- Sciolla, G. (2004). *Physics II: Electricity and Magnetism*. Retrieved October 7, 2011, from MIT OpenCourseWare: <http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/physics/8-022-physics-ii-electricity-and-magnetism-fall-2004/>
- The Encyclopedia Americana Corporation. (1918). Electricity, Its History and Progress. In *The Encyclopedia Americana* (Vol. 10, pp. 175-180). New York: J. B. Lyon Company. Retrieved November 2011, from <http://books.google.com/books?id=62UMAAAYAAJ>
- The Royal Society. (2011). *Fellowship*. Retrieved December 2, 2011, from The Royal Society: Excellence in Science: <http://royalsociety.org/about-us/fellowship/>
- Turner, F. M. (1980, December). Public Science in Britain, 1880-1919. *Isis*, 71(4), 589-608.
- Walter Lewin, J. B. (2010). *Physics II: Electricity and Magnetism*. Retrieved October 7, 2011, from MIT OpenCourseWare: <http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/physics/8-02sc-physics-ii-electricity-and-magnetism-fall-2010/>
- Wolfram Research Products. (2007). *cgs*. Retrieved December 7, 2011, from Eric Weisstein's World of Physics: <http://scienceworld.wolfram.com/physics/cgs.html>
- Wolfram Research Products. (2007). *Leyden Jar*. Retrieved December 7, 2011, from Eric Weisstein's World of Physics: <http://scienceworld.wolfram.com/physics/LeydenJar.html>

Endnotes

1. <http://hyperphysics.phy-astr.gsu.edu/hbase/magnetic/galvan.html>
2. http://www.cyberphysics.co.uk/My_Notes/Magnets1.htm
3. <http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/physics/8-022-physics-ii-electricity-and-magnetism-fall-2004/lecture-notes/lecture2.pdf>
4. <http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/physics/8-022-physics-ii-electricity-and-magnetism-fall-2004/lecture-notes/lecture1.pdf>
5. <http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/physics/8-022-physics-ii-electricity-and-magnetism-fall-2004/lecture-notes/lecture1.pdf>
6. <http://electronics.howstuffworks.com/capacitor.htm/printable>

Acceptable Within the Unacceptable

Deanna Stocker

There exists a peaceful contradiction in Christian thought over the interaction of religious devotees (monks and nuns) with the opposing gender. The clear judgment expressed by both sides was that interactions should be as minimal as possible because of potential temptation and distraction away from their eschatological goals. As a result, vows of celibacy and intentional segregation of the sexes became commonplace and the expected norm. Any arrangement in which men and women devoted to monastic life interacted had the potential to bring the virtue of both sides into question. However, this divisional decision was not maintained strictly, if at all, for interactions between individuals who were both blood related and devoted to a spiritual lifestyle. Instead, it was encouraged and adapted into the life stories of saints as an acceptable and beneficial interaction. Fiona Griffiths, in her article for the *Journal of Church History*, “Siblings and the Sexes Within the Medieval Religious Life”, hones in on this anomaly of “acceptable” and encouraged inter-sex relationships.

Griffiths sets up her article with Elisabeth of Schönau[i] as a guiding example of the Christian stance that interactions between the sexes was questionable only when the two people involved are not united both by blood and spiritual interests. Elisabeth was Griffith’s choice example because of the former’s series of visions in 1156 that concerned Saint Ursula and her cousin Saint Caesarius.[ii] In these visions, Elisabeth learned from Saint Ursula that it was common for blood-related (to the virgins) men to accompany the British virgins of Cologne cemetery on their pilgrimages. This act of chaperoning was acceptable because those men “had done so licitly, primarily as members of the women’s families.”[iii] Elisabeth readily accepted this explanation and did not consider any sort of scandal between the virgins and their male escorts because of the basis of blood relation. Her acceptance, as Fiona Griffiths suggested in the article, is a clear confirmation of the peaceful contradiction over inter-sex relations in religious life during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[iv] Through the background of Elisabeth’s visions, conclusions, and the rhetoric of that time, Griffiths lays out her premise for the rest of the article: “As Elisabeth’s visions demonstrate, alongside the drive toward sexual segregation within the religious life there was an alternate spiritual possibility, one in which contact between the sexes was not only acceptable, but could even be mutually advantageous.”[v]

After her introduction with Elisabeth Schönau, Griffiths breaks her article into four sections and a conclusion. The first section highlights the understandings of spiritual and biological family in early Christian thought. She discusses the fact that “according to early Christians, believers were united by ties of spiritual kinship which superseded the bonds of biological kinship.”[vi] The biological family was supposed to be left behind in favor of a spiritual connection to god and fellow believers. The biological family was an obstacle that had to be overcome instead of embraced. This was interesting because even in spiritual language, believers would refer to each other as “brother” or “sister” but their connection in that name was mostly superficial as a “spiritual family.” On the other side of the scale, the conduct of spiritual family members could be called into question if “spiritual brothers and sisters might overstep the limits of acceptable affection” causing “shameful suspicions and slanders.”[vii] Griffiths points out that, in response to the possibility of slander, the anomaly of blood-related male to female interaction became acceptable and even promoted by medieval Christian writers and church leaders “as an alternate, and legitimate, context for relations.” Relations between blood-related aesthetics was easier to shield from accusations and therefore were encouraged because interaction between males and females were beneficial only when they were without pressure or filled in any way with flesh-based temptation.

The second segment of the article is titled “Brothers and Sisters in Late Antique Monastic Practice.” Here Fiona Griffiths provides the reader example after example of church fathers and female saints who honored close ties to their siblings and held a specific interest in their spiritual development. Among those named include: Antony, Pachomius, Macrina, Cassian, Caesarius, Gregory of Nyssa, and the bishop brothers Leander & Isidore. In each case, the saint named, according to hagiographies about them, took measures in order to guide and/or keep with their siblings in religious life. The men in particular were cited as taking care to see that the future of their sisters were ensured by placing them in pre-existing religious communities or founding new ones (“paired” or “doubled” with their own).

The examples began with Antony because he was said to have placed his own sister with a group of religious women before entering the religious life himself. John Cassian was another primary example for Griffiths to use because not only did he found communities for both men and women, he also placed his sister Caesaria “as abbess over the female house” and “penned a rule for women”.^[viii] Griffiths does something interesting in this section because, with each example (starting from Antony and working up chronologically), she sets up a traditional basis for blood-related sibling interaction similar to the instructional texts created by those same church fathers. For example, Cassian uses a similar style of chronological example development to support his own theories on the monastic lifestyle—he simply used first biblical figures and then moved on to discussing Antony.

Griffiths’ third section, titled “Benedict and Scholastica”, explores the existence of a sister in a majority of the hagiographies of saints by using Benedict and his alleged sister as her primary example. She points out that the existence of a sister persistently shows up in the recorded lives of holy men far too often to only be a coincidence and therefore raises a few questions.^[ix] These questions included a wish to discern why the possession and concern for the spiritual welfare of a sister appears to have become a standard element in the hagiographies of so many male saints. To summarize Griffiths’ pursuit of answers on that subject: The addition of a sister in many of the accounts, especially that of Scholastica in the hagiography of Benedict by Gregory, was very formulaic. There is the possibility that she did not exist at all and mention of her in the hagiography was possibly to broaden his appeal to a larger audience or to protect the saint’s name if he had a spiritual friendship with a non-related female. The plugging of a “sister” into the hagiographies of saints was a way to set precedence and “served to perpetuate the brother-sister bond, mediating the late antique paradigm to sibling intimacy.”^[x] Religious sibling interactions were cast as pious and proper inter-gender relationships to be cultivated thanks to their appearance in the lives of saints—essentially, the saints had such relationships therefore it was okay for later religious persons to do the same.

Section number four (“Brothers—Sisters in the 12th Century”) reflects on how relationships between siblings were beneficial to both sides in their spiritual development. Initially, the most logical benefit of interaction between pious siblings was that brother (or other male relatives) could provide their female relations with the means needed to survive and the chance to receive the care of a priest. Only blood-related men were seen during the time as properly qualified to provide pastoral support to religiously devoted women without risk of corrupting the interaction. On the opposite side of the gender divide, the men benefited from supporting their female relatives in religious life because it gave them spiritual protection through biological association. Griffiths supports this point when she discusses Leander’s clear “expectation that he would receive an eternal reward through” his sister’s piety. The quote from Leander was: “You are my shelter in Christ; you, dearest sister, are my security... Christ will not allow ‘to perish a brother whose sister He has espoused.’”^[xi] A second way in which the males benefited from supporting their female relations was spiritual inspiration and sometimes guidance. The example used by Griffiths for this benefit is from Gregory of Nyssa’s account of his sister Macrina and her role as a spiritual “teacher.” “Women had the potential to suppress men in their piety and intimacy of their relationship to Christ” but, required the aid of men to receive certain rites.^[xii] The men needed the women in order to glimpse deeper levels of spiritual compassion and the women required the protection and spiritual support of their male relatives in order to practice and survive during a time when female devotion to religious life was easily questioned.

The fifth section provides for the reader an overview of the persistence of family bonds within medieval monastic life, despite traditional calls to leave biological family behind in favor of spiritual unity.^[xiii] Griffiths supports her statements on the family with more examples of familial relations within monastic communities. Biological commitment to family became an important metaphor and motif for prescribing relations between the sexes. The idea was to piously treat all of the opposite sex as if they were biological family as that type of affectionate but platonic relationship was and remains the hardest to suspect of or degrade into corruption. Finally, Griffiths brings together the ideas of her past five sections with a two-page conclusion. In it she reiterates that antique and medieval Christians encouraged connections between blood-related persons in spiritual life because that kinship was a part of a tradition-based model for proper interaction between the sexes. That type of relationship was as close as devoted religious persons could come to relations without immediate risk of corruption of their eschatological goals.

Notes

- [i] A German Benedictine visionary who, although not canonized, has been referred to as a “saint” for her work and spiritual visions.
- [ii] The bodies of the two Saints had been found together in a grave with a number of other male and female bodies. The Saints had been brought to reside in Elisabeth’s convent and so triggered visions. These visions resulted in her most popular and controversial work *Liber Revelationum*.
- [iii] Fiona Griffiths, “Siblings and the Sexes within Medieval Religious Life,” 2.
- [iv] Ibid (paragraph 2)
- [v] Ibid (paragraph 3)
- [vi] Griffiths, 3. Paragraph 1
- [vii] Ibid, paragraph 3
- [viii] Griffiths, 4 paragraph 3
- [ix] Griffiths, 5 paragraph 1
- [x] Griffiths, 6 paragraph 3
- [xi] Griffiths 7, paragraph 4
- [xii] Griffiths 9, paragraph 1
- [xiii] “Far from renouncing family and the associated danger of the flesh, these examples demonstrate that medieval monastic men and women maintained close ties with their blood kin, despite their entrance into the new spiritualized ‘family’ of the monastery.” Griffiths, 10 paragraph 2

Works Cited

Griffiths, Fiona. “Siblings and the Sexes Within the Medieval Religious Life,” *Journal of Church History* 77, no. 1 (March 2008): 26-5 .



Finding Wisdom

Colleen Mason

Some thoughts and reflections from the year:

Chapter One. Introductions

I'm Colleen. We aren't close yet so I'll let you know a little something about myself. I like Rubik's cubes, Pink Floyd and Beethoven. I love long naps on the beach but I love mojitos even more. I'm weird in the I-really-like-that-band-that-you-probably think-was-just-ok kind of way. The reason I came to Sacred Heart University was to fence and it's probably the best and the worst thing I've ever done to myself. My first job was a camp counselor; it taught me that I don't ever want to ever be a teacher. My motto in life is "Don't bash it until you try it."

In July of 2011 I was in a car crash while driving back home from work. There weren't any life-threatening injuries but I had a hard time dealing with the emotional trauma. For weeks afterwards I had nightmares where I relived that feeling of crashing into that truck. It's a terrible sensation, the powerless feeling of being unable to stop yourself from slamming into another car. It's like being on a roller coaster no matter how much you scream you just keep on going. And no one will stop the ride to let you off, because it would ruin the fun for everyone else. When I had a similar accident months later I just swore off cars altogether.

Chapter Two: Those Sword Things

Fencing is a pretty big deal in my life. But for those you don't know, fencing is pretty much a religion. Once you start fencing, everything in your life suddenly changes. Every interaction with people, technology, and music, pretty much anything can be translated into fencing terms once you get immersed into the sport.

What I love about fencing is making that perfect hit, taking a perfect step. It's the perfection in the movement. I crave those moments when you can feel the beauty of perfect action and reaction.

Fencing is the reason I am at Sacred Heart University. The team works hard. We start training the day we arrive at SHU and don't stop until there's only a few weeks left of school. Everyone on the team is super close and we all end up knowing way too much about each other by the time the season is over.

It's exactly like a giant family.

Chapter Three. September

Before the car accident I used to think that when I died, I would want to go out looking death in the face. That's why every time I crossed a road I would stare down the drivers of those cars who are waiting for you to cross. In the back of my head I was always thinking that they did not have their foot down on the break hard enough and they would run me over.

Two weeks after the accident I came back to school. The move back to Bridgeport could have not have come sooner. I was getting antsy back at home. I was missing my friends at school; friends at home were starting to get dull in comparison. I especially could not wait to move into a new apartment, where I would have my own room and live with people I actually liked.

Sacred Heart University is a little school trying to act like a giant monster. It's all noise and construction, all doctors and professors running around with meetings and tests and machines buzzing and students talking. It's hard to find a quiet place to sit and think. Everyone is always trying to do something. The change from slow-home life to fast pace-university time is a shocker. But you get over it eventually.

That first meeting with your old friends is the best. These are the people who know you. The ones who you really live with, your pseudo family who has seen grow up at college.

Chapter Four. November

Gordon is one of my best friends at Sacred Heart. We get along like two peas in a pod. I could tell you stories about the crazy things Gordon and I have done over the years. But one of the craziest adventures happened during a cold September weekend when we drove up to Massachusetts to his cousin Shana's Tupac memorial party.

A party as high class as this had a dress code; guests were asked to wear an appropriate ghetto or gangsta outfit. To take care of this, Gordon and me put on as much bling as we could find, drew fake tattoos on each other, dyed his beard gold and spray-painted my hair pink. We brought our posse; Mike and Casey came to party. They were also appropriately attired. We represented with pride. Our gang looked so good.

Bandanas, wife beaters and grills were everywhere at the party. In the corner sat a modest table set with pictures of Tupac and simple offerings – some CDs, a few chains and some dollar bills. His music graced the air. The atmosphere of the party was chill and well, let's be honest, there were a bunch of old people there. A lot of them were nearing thirty. And they were crowding the dance floor. It was cool for a while, but us young folks started to get antsy. There is only so much h'orderves can do before a bunch of kids have to move on and do something else.

Chapter Five. Repercussions

The evil side of being an athlete reared its ugly head and spat in my face early in September. It started off simply enough. I started having a little more soreness and being a little extra tired after practice. By the end of November I had lost the feeling in my left hand and had these horrible stabbing pains in my shoulder. Turns out my body hates fencing and the nerves in my shoulder were getting pinched because of tendonitis and muscle spasms. This developed into weeks and months of rehab.

With two years of collegiate competing and eight years total training, I was pretty much sitting on a ticking bomb. When your body betrays you things get dark. I'm not claiming to be some kind of suffering martyr or anything, but pain gives you perspective. Some things are hard to do, others become impossible. When people see that you're in pain they feel bad for you. Which is so nice. But it gets old fast. Fencing has become something that was once great but now is terrible.

Chapter Six. Apple Liberation

Gordon, me, Mike and Casey had reached a breaking point at the Tupac memorial party. Casey was drunk, Mike was getting to a point where he should stop drinking. We all hopped into the car and left the party and drove to an apple orchard. Now, long story short, there were actually two apple orchards. One was owned by a great guy, John Castles – been there for years, a real pillar of the community. The other was operated by a real jerk, Tom McCauley. Who was doing everything possible to run Mr. Castles into the ground.

Earlier in the day I had enjoyed apples from Mr. Castle's orchard. And by gum, those were the best apples I ever had. Just like that I became personally invested in this dire struggle between good and evil.

Now, McCauley was an extremely obnoxious advertiser of his orchard. All up and down the street he had placed horribly worded and misspelled signs saying "Free Apples Drops," to draw people to his orchard.

To do right by the community we stole one of McCauley's signs. We sent Casey out there to grab the sign, but for some reason she found it impossible to remove from the ground. Upon later investigation, we learned she had been trying to pull out a stop sign. Escape was compromised by a cop sighting, but he only waved at us as he drove by.

I am proud to say that McCauley's now holds a place of dishonor in my room.

Chapter Seven. Death of the Old Year

Gordon and I aren't friends any more.

You bet there is that awkward, oh I see we're in the same hallway but I'm just going to smile and nod, situation going on.

I want to blame my shoulder, because that sparked the whole situation. After months of being treated like a porcelain doll I couldn't handle one more person treating me like I was a delicate flower. I couldn't handle the frustration of constantly being looked at as something broken so I locked him out. The friendship was shut down.

Things escalated. Words were said. Feelings of betrayal, abandonment. Lots of emotions going on. Lots of anger and frustration. The person that I thought was my friend didn't really turn out to be the person I thought he was.

Moving on.

Chapter Eight. March. Done. Freedom.

When the fencing season is finally over it is like coming back from summer vacation. You see all your friends again, get involved with activities and go stir crazy from lack of having anything to do. It's a great time of year to do new things—weather gets nice, you hear about what people are thinking about doing with themselves over the summer, and you start thinking about where you're going to find yourself in the next couple of months.

I found myself wandering over to where the philosophers are. Boy! Are they wild; those thinkers in the administration building are a breed apart. Have you ever wondered what it's like to imagine your hand as an elegant dancer? Have you ever contemplated what it would feel like to choose to save one human life over five? It's all new words, all new complicated Greek terms and all these crazy philosophers contemplating human experience. One simple phrase like "All is One" can mean so much. It's a whole other realm of experience.

Anyway, for someone who doesn't get a lot of free time it is so nice to meet people who don't know anything about fencing or anything about me. And it's just as awesome to play the mental games that come with philosophy. It's literally a breath of fresh air.

New thoughts, new faces. All this wonderful potential for new things to happen.

Chapter Nine. April

A while ago my mentor, Doug, told that you could change a person's day just by smiling at a stranger.

Early November my friend Tory took me on what she calls a "rage drive." It's when she goes out late at night and just drives on the road because sometimes the world is too much. Tory told me a lot of things that night. She told me about how her friend had raped her when she was drunk and she had screamed out and no one heard her. About how she had no money left for school. She told me about her alcohol and drug addictions, and how she had broken them but how she never stops thinking about it. She told me how the suicide of her friend kills her every day. She told me that she planned to kill herself when her dad died.

Tory is a tiny person; she stands barely over five feet. She has dark hair and dark eyes. She wears glasses. She is someone who is hard to notice in a crowd.

Later that week she told me that if I hadn't gone with her, if I hadn't listened to her, she would have tried to kill herself.

Then one day I heard that someone I used to know killed himself.

Chapter Ten. The Ending

Here I am, finishing up the semester. The long days loom overhead. Summer is here. It will be good to get away. Do something else for a little.

Looking at this year I really saw how some things come to an end: friendships, dreams. It's not bad, but getting blindsided by it will shock a person. You can't know people for they change. They fight being pinned down by the assumptions we make about them.

I think that it is important not to dwell on things that can't be changed. It's better to let some things go then to hold on to what's not working. In the end you must laugh with the good times otherwise it all gets too dark too quick.

Ahead is senior year. And after that, who knows.

Love is a Marriage Tonight

Olga Pinsky

Groom was born here
Bride was born not so near
Yet their fates collided
As they glided
Through their lives
Love is a marriage tonight

They went to different schools
They tried to follow the rules
Dated all around
Their feet never touched the ground
Love is a marriage tonight

Fate stepped in one day
Showed each of them the way
Toward each other
Their eternal permanent lover
Love is a marriage tonight

Got to know each other so free
Figured that's where they were to be
Added onto their home
More spacious rooms for them to roam
Love is a marriage tonight

The groom proposed on a ship
He figured that was really hip
Bride didn't put up a fight
Nor run away with fright
Love is a marriage tonight

To each other betrothed
G-d blessed them up from above
Now it's time to plan the wedding
Where could be the perfect setting
Love is a marriage tonight

Tonight we all gather here
To celebrate their love oh so dear
Drink and be happy
Please people let's not get sappy
Love is a marriage tonight

Sending lots of love, health, and luck
Don't worry and don't look at the clock
Hope your loving marriage
Will soon produce a baby carriage
Love is a marriage tonight!

You wind sky and me

Gabrielle Washington

One day, I will travel beyond what's behind me

Travel ahead of what's next to me

And extend farther to what's meant for me

Because with you the world seems so much better

The skies and I will one day call it home

I don't know where you're headed

May I come with you?

We can see the great plains of New Mexico

See the great lakes and rivers, the beauty of white snow

Flowing from hill to hill

Running through the fire of Natures design

I drop all my things by this line; I don't need them where I am going

All I need is you my guitar and this sky of mine



Untitled
Ariel David

Though it seems like never ending night,
Soon you will see the light.
Do not despair or weep,
For everything is not as seems.
Even in endless night,
The stars guide till dawn.

**

Stand up if you believe
You are who you are.
Love others who do the same
Even from afar.
Speak out against people
Who choose to be afraid.
(Defend those unable
to stand up and join the fray)
If all this happens,
tomorrow will be a brighter day

**

Who are you to say,
Who someone can love?
Who someone can be?

Who are you to say,
If they go to heaven?
Or somewhere down below?

Who are you to say,
Love is one way?
When god himself has shown
Love dwells in all of us, in every home.

**

I see your crying faces and want to turn and say,
Shouldn't you love your family?
Even if they're gay?
Shouldn't you love a person
Who is unafraid to say,
"Love me for being me, love me for being gay"

**

Who will fight for those too afraid to fight?
Who will stand up for those who cry at night?
Who will represent the people who love will all their might?
Will you stand for something, knowing it's what's right?

**

Back In Time Future
Olga Pinsky

Luxembourg
Old world
Buildings hundreds
Of years old

And yet people
Young, children
Playing among
Silent history

A cathedral
A crane
Architecture
Back in time future
Two periods colliding
Expanding
Encompassing

Royalty
Next to Iphone land
Bars
Birds
A temple
A church
Or many

Cars to fit
A ton of clowns
Drive down tiny streets

A century of
Cobblestones
Then cement
Instead of dirt

Culture infested
Smorgasbord
Of nationalities
Languages
Jobs
Opinions

Back in time future
In the today
Of the yesterday
Toward the tomorrow
Next year
Moving
Never ending
Onward and onward
Not forgetting
Where they come from
Or come to

Here in Luxembourg
Anything goes!



Undivided

Olga Pinsky

We came
We gathered
We stood
In the beginning
It was “us”
It was “them”

We were
Foreigners
Strangers
Gathered
By a common love
Travel
Adventure

Some friends
Others not
Flying by
Big aluminum birds
Into the unknown
From the familiar

Will we like it?
Them?
Hate it?
Flounder hopelessly?
Triumph greatly?

Then it happened
We met
The mysterious “them”
No fear
Just curiosity

In two weeks’ time
“We” and “them”
Became “us”
A team
Group
Undivided

An international
Multi-cultural family
Emotions
Languages
Laughter
Melded into one
Differences
Melted away
Along with
Fear
Uncertainty
Replaced
By wonder

Unleashed
Curiosity
While moving
As one body
Day by day

Through the
Insides of a
Steel plant
Coming close
To things rarely
Seen by outsiders

In awe of operations
Not taking
One moment
For granted

Not the oversized coats
The silly glasses
The dirt
The smell
The massive amounts
Of molten liquid lava

Taking a train ride
Past a nuclear power plant
Belching out smoke
A stark reminder
Of how precious life is

Walking inside
A cathedral
Larger, wider
Taller than
Anything imagined

Following a ghostly
Shape of a boy
Beckoning to follow
To come hither

Sitting in a court room
Surrounded by
Languages of other places
Swirling all around
Feeling like an astronaut
Looking down at
A magnificent earth

Being led
Through the halls
Of money
Learning the ins and outs
Of financing 27 country states

Stopping to inhale
History
Wisdom
 knowledge

A group
Of foreigners
Foreign no more
Meshing with the residents

Dinner, lunch
Drinks, dancing
Strangers have
Become an extension
Of existence

When it is time
To leave
How do you
Divide
The undivided

Parting is such
Sweet sorrow
Goodbye is not forever
Regardless if we
Are 0 miles away
Or ,000

Love, collectiveness
Undivided family
Knows no borders
Distance
Length of passing time

One day
Be it on this
Side of the world
Or that

Our group
Strong
Smiling
Will reunite
Once again

Until then
We smile
At the memories
Photos
Videos
Jokes
Experiences

Keep in touch
America/Luxembourg

For it's a small
World after all

Taking out the Trash

Christopher Mastrocola

Dr. Young gave us 10 random headlines from newspapers and asked if could construct them into a small monodrama...this is what I got...I hope you like it.

It's 2012 and once again, the annual **kiss-off** begins with my best friend. My friend always sends me this message every New Year's and sometimes I wish he would forget. I mean with all the **sex, drugs and e chords** today, **an uneasy search for truth** comes when trying to look for the right one. I mean, kissing someone is easy but this contest, it's just getting a little ridiculous. To be honest, I feel that **men change**. I am 20 years old right now and don't want to be kissing random girls for the sake of gaining points to win the kiss-off. I feel like this is a **blood sport sometimes**. I remember this one girl who would not stop saying yes after we would kiss for 5 seconds. Every 5 seconds she would say, yes! We would kiss for 5 seconds. Yes! Another 5 seconds. Yes! And another 5. Yes!....Yes! Yes! Yes!....If I stayed there any longer **that really loud and potentially uncomfortable situation** could have became a lot worse. **The mess I'm in** has to stop and I need to put an end to his this immature game. **From happy to happier** I used to get but now, I think about everything I'm doing and I gave myself a tough review. From now on, this message will join the rest of the **deleted messages**. I guess you can say it's time to take out the trash.

I can

Gabrielle Washington

I can break you down if you let me
I can mend your broken heart
Take my hand; we'll walk through the day
Happiness is always on its way
I can sense you breathing in my lungs
I can feel your heart beat on mine
I can feel when your happy or when your blue
But I can also make all your dreams come true
Understanding, peace of mind
The hardest qualities to define
Look at me, what do you see
I won't let labels define you or me
I can feel your pulse moving fast
I can feel your pain throbbing away
Lost in a world, so inhumane
No understanding for the human race
But don't give up; hope is on its way
I can bet on a better day
I sense you breathing in my lungs
I feel when you're happy
I can make all your dreams come true
I can break you down if you let me
I can mend your broken heart
Take my hand; we'll walk through the day
Happiness is always on its way

No Regrets

Max Koski

Characters

JAMES McTIGUE – (Ages 20 – 82), gruff, unapologetic, temperamental, a bit irrational, a bit racist, and has a Brooklyn accent mixed with a hint of Irish.

SAMUEL WEISS – (Ages 20 – 82), well-spoken, thoughtful, tries to avoid conflict (verbal and physical), he a bit too agreeable, and has a hoarse Yiddish and Brooklyn mixed accent.

RALPH TURNER – Age 22, leader archetype, acts courageous even when scared, speaks bluntly, and has a southern accent.

SARAH KIRSCHMAN – Age 26, she is attractive and intelligent, values commitment, is more outspoken than most women of her time, and has an old-timey Brooklyn accent.

Setting

Present day: An ordinary afternoon in Prospect Park, Brooklyn.

Stage

Center: A public chess table with checkers pieces on it, and two metal park chairs on either side, where elderly James and Sam sit for the duration of the play.

Left and Right: Flashbacks take place in these spaces, so the sets are interchanged as the play goes on.

...

Scene One

(Lights come up on center stage where James is sitting in the metal park chair, turned so it faces the audience. The other chair is empty, and no checkers pieces are set up on the table.)

JAMES: Late again, he is. Don't matter none to me though. He'll show up, he always does. I'm talkin' about my good buddy Sammy, by the way. Nah, he's more than just my buddy. We're brothers, Sam 'n me. We've been through hell and back, spent our whole lives together. See, I used to have brothers by blood. I think there were... (Pauses, thinking.) ...four. Yeah, that sounds about right. O'course, they all died when I was real young. Dillon, Thomas Jr. and Liam got themselves shot in World War 2 by some Japs. Then Sean got ripped apart by a Nazi mortar.

My folks probably would've made more of us little Irish fuckers if my Mum hadn't passed just after that war. Each time she got the news that another of her sons had died, well, I think it took away a part of her, until she only had me left, and I guess that just wasn't good enough. I think I still have a scar from when my Pa beat me stupid after her funeral. When my Mum passed, seems all he ever did was get drunk and beat me. I guess I should've left that place sooner, but I had nowhere to go, and truth be told, I was pretty damn scared of the old man.

Then when I was probably...sixteen, my Pop got mixed in with some bad folks, probably from his gambling debts or whatsoever. One night he just shows up at our apartment door, hollerin' that he's lost his key. I open it, and he's really messed up. I'm talkin' bleeding from just about everywhere you can bleed. Two black eyes, hair pulled out, bruises up'n'down, his clothes all ripped. I swear I will never forget that sight as long as I live. Least I could do was help him in, lay him down on his bed. He begged me, half-conscious, to not call the cops, or the hospital, that he'd be fine come morning. Bein' the fuckin' stupid kid that I was, I listened. Next morning comes, the old man's dead.

And back in those days, no one gave two shits if a poor Irish drunkard died from gettin' beaten bloody by other poor Irish drunkards.

The next two years were me workin' my bloody arse off at some wharf in Queens until goin' straight to enlist in the Army. I figured it'd be a good shot since there was no war goin' on at the time, and seemed like my only way out of the pisshole that was New York City. Shit, was I wrong on all counts, but I don't regret joining up. orea came outta nowhere, but that's where I met Sammy, so that's worth a lot. He was a scared little kid fresh off the boat, shittin' himself if a frog croaked in the trees. It was all I could do to take him under my wing, teach him to stay the fuck alive in that damned war. We stuck it out though, me 'n Sammy, and made it back to Brooklyn in one piece, more'o'less.

(Laughs.) Well shit, speakin' of that fucker...

(James turns his attention to Sam, who enters the stage and sits in the empty metal chair.)

JAMES: *(Sarcastically.)* How kind of you to show up.

SAM: Yeah, yeah, you know I can't walk as fast as I used to. *(Groans.)* Ugh, these chairs are the worst. Honestly, sitting here every day is destroying what little bone structure I have left at my age. *(He shifts uncomfortably in his seat.)*

JAMES: Quit stallin' and set up. I've got that winner's itch today.

JAMES: Quit stallin' and set up. I've got that winner's itch today.

SAM: *(Chuckling.)* Jimmy, you haven't won a game of checkers in your life.

JAMES: Bah! We'll see who's laughin' when I wipe the floor with yer shriveled old arse.

(Sam shakes his head, smiling and taking out a full set of red wooden checkers pieces from his pockets, placing them neatly on the board. James follows suit with his own set of black metal pieces and both of them lean in, eager to play.)

Scene Two

(An hour later, same stage, just a few checkers pieces are left on the board.)

SAM: Jimmy, just give up so we can play another game.

JAMES: You know me too well for that, Sammy. I'll never admit defeat.

SAM: *(Sighs.)* You are just running from my kings with yours, prolonging this for no reason. Is that how an honorable soldier acts? Running from battle with his tail between his legs?

JAMES: *(Angrily.)* Don't you spout that "honor" bullshit with me, Sammy. You 'n I both know that the kind o' honor in stories 'n fairy tales are useless when it comes to real battle. In war, the only rule is to stay alive. You can call me a coward, a craven, and a lily-livered fraidy-cat. But those who stay and fight certain death are just fuckin' morons.

SAM: All of those who stay and fight are morons, eh Jimmy? You really are turning senile if you don't remember Ralph Turner anymore.

JAMES: *(Growing very quiet.)* Shit...

SAM: *(Saying to audience.)* Separated from our platoon one foggy night, well into enemy territory, surrounded on all sides... *(Pause.)* It would sound like the setting of a good film if it wasn't all too real.

(Lights dim on Sam and James, and open up on stage right. There is a forest clearing, three men sitting huddled in the center, all with full soldier uniforms and gear. One is 20 year old Sam, naïve and terrified. The other is 20 year old James, who is just as gruff and racist even at this young age.)

SAM: *(Shaking, talking in a hushed, frightened voice.)* Jimmy, this fog is making me wanna puke. I can't see past my own nose. I'm sick of sitting out here in the middle of nowhere. Nobody's gonna find us and we're gonna die.

JAMES: Sammy, get a hold o' yourself. If we can just hold out till morning, I'm sure there'll be a search party sent for us.

RALPH: Look, both o' you sissies shut yer traps. Just 'cuz we can't see the enemy don't mean the enemy ain't nearby. No one's comin' to rescue us neither, so come morn', I expect you boys to be ready to book it out o' here on my signal.

JAMES: *(Mumbling.)* Yes, sir.

SAM: Yes sir. *(Looking up suddenly.)* D-did you hear that?

JAMES: Hear what?

SAM: I swear I just heard a voice. Maybe it's our rescue... we-we're saved!

RALPH: That's damned impossible. We ain't been out here nearly long enough fer anyone to come lookin', let alone actually find us. Now are ya sure ya heard a voice, or is it just nerves gettin' the best of ya?

SAM: I mean, I thought I did

JAMES: Shit, I just heard it too. Sounded like gook-speak.

RALPH: Alright, keep your fuckin' voices down. They ain't gonna be able to see us through this fog, so stay low, and keep quiet.

(The sound of other voices becomes clear, reverberating from the back of the stage. James, Sam, and Ralph are whispering now.)

JAMES: They're getting closer.

SAM: They're gonna find us.

JAMES: Sounds like a lot of the bastards.

SAM: They're gonna kill us.

RALPH: Y'all need to shut the hell up. I'm thinkin', okay? Makin' a plan. They ain't gonna kill us.

(There is a rustling noise and the voices reach their loudest yet. Ralph stands suddenly, rifle in hand.)

RALPH: Okay. On my mark, you two get up off yer asses and run the hell back the way we came, and don't you dare look back.

SAM: Wait, but what about you? Why

JAMES: (*Bowing his head.*) Just listen to the man, Sammy. Don't question him and this'll work.

(*Realization flashes across Sam's face and he gets ready to protest, but before he can, Ralph turns from them, and walks towards the back of the stage, or towards the voices.*)

RALPH: (*Yelling.*) Run! Now fer you, ya fuckin' commie bastards!

(*Gunfire is heard as Ralph exits the stage, and James and Sam follow. The lights dim on stage right, going back up on center stage and the checkers table with elderly James and Sam.*)

JAMES: I'd never forget him, Sammy. That man saved our lives. He was the fuckin' definition of a hero.

SAM: So do you take back what you said?

JAMES: (*Looking pained to admit he was wrong.*) Not... not all those who stay and fight are morons.

SAM: James McTigue admitting fault. I never thought I'd live to see the day.

JAMES: (*Laughing.*) Ya know: now I'm really convinced to not give up on this game!

SAM: (*Sighing, smiling and shaking his head.*) You meshugana old coot.

JAMES: I'm gonna beat you yet, you'll see, Sammy!

Scene Three

(*Sam turns towards the audience, talking at them while James deliberates his next move.*)

SAM: Jimmy gets like this a lot. Stubborn as a mule, and maybe as dumb as one too. We're opposites in just about every way, so some days I still can't believe we've stuck together this long. I don't regret the time spent, though. Not a bit. It's nice having a friend like Jimmy, because as foolhardy as he can get, I know he'll stick by me till the bitter end. We make interesting bedfellows, a Jew and an Irishman. (*Laughs hoarsely, turning into a cough.*) Boy, that would have really infuriated my father. He always did hate the Irish. Why, I remember him having an Irish foreman at one of the construction yards he worked at when I was a boy. He came home after the first day of work hollering about how he was gonna "push that potato headed schmuck off a scaffold." (*Chuckles.*) That got Ma so steamed, she whacked the old man upside the head with his own shoe, yelling at him for using such vulgar language in front of his children. Ma believed cussing to be "ungodly." She was a very religious woman, going to synagogue every Friday for Shabbat services and making sure me and my brothers got Bar Mitzvahs like good Jewish children. Ma believed intensely in Judaism, thinking it's teachings to be the solution to every problem. Being Jewish was part of her identity to her core, more so than being a New Yorker, or even an American. All she seemed to talk about for years when I was young was of her children going to rabbinical school to become rabbis of their own congregations. My two younger brothers, Joshua and David, both fulfilled my mother's wish. That never surprised me really; they always were the studious types.

Me, I just wasn't cut out for that kind of thing. As a boy, I had no place in my mind for synagogue or Hebrew school. All I had time for was going to movies and hearing about the war. I remember watching those newsreels of Normandy and the Pacific like it was yesterday. I thought being a soldier fighting for my country was the absolute greatest thing a man could aspire to. What can I say though, I was a kid, and that propaganda worked pretty darn well on kids. My mother, however, was decidedly not Rosie the Riveter, and my father was never keen on the idea of the government forcing its citizens to fight. So you can imagine what it was like in the family household when I announced that instead of trying to get into college, I was going to enlist in the army. I still vividly remember the day I packed to leave for basic training in '49. My folks, well, they wouldn't even say goodbye to me when I left the apartment, suitcase in hand.

War, as they say, was hell. Only good thing to come out of Korea was me and Jimmy's friendship. When we finally got back, we opened a grocery in Brooklyn together, just around the corner from here. Those were good days to be young and alive. After what we'd seen on the other side of the world, we just wanted to do the furthest thing from combat as humanly possible.

(Sam frowns, beginning to talk slower, looking pained to speak about the next part of his tale.)

When I came back from Korea, I moved into a place only a few miles from my old home, but I never could muster up the courage to go there. I kept telling myself I'd go "tomorrow," drop by in a week when I had the time. A week turned into a month, and the months went by faster than I thought possible. I didn't speak to my folks for over ten years. It was a funeral that ended the silence. My father's funeral. When I showed up in our synagogue that day, there was a rush of silence I hadn't heard since the calm before battle. The next week I decided to go home for the first time in a decade to sit Shiva with my family. The discomfort and hurt feelings never seemed to truly disappear, but my brothers, and even my mother accepted me for the whole week, and let me help accept mourners into our household.

(He stops frowning, looking brighter as he remembers more.)

The next week, I was helping Ma out by bringing her groceries free of charge. The week after that, I was sitting down to Shabbat dinner with her and my brothers, a tradition which carried on for many years after that. I guess it truly took a death to bring our family close again. I even invited Jimmy to some of those dinners, but he always told gave me the same answer. *(Attempting to talk like James, using a gruff tone.)* "Sammy, I got no time for religion, 'specially when there's baseball to watch."

I think he was just unsettled by all that family togetherness, but I never stopped trying to include him. I mean, I'm the only 'family' Jimmy has, and he's always been more of a brother to me than my own kin. Maybe that's why neither of us ever got married; too busy looking out for each other's well-being to deal with the whole dynamic of women. *(Beat.)* Y'know, I was actually pretty close to settling down once many years ago, even before my father passed. Her name was Sarah.

Scene Four

(Lights dim on Sam and James, and open up on stage left, which is set as a New York sidewalk. A twenty-six year old Sam and a young woman, Sarah, enter holding hands.)

SARAH: *(Smiling.)* Thanks for taking me to the movies tonight, Sam. I had a swell time. That Marilyn Monroe sure is something.

SAM: She's alright, but you, I bet you could put her out of a job if you went into acting, Sarah.

SARAH: *(Chuckles.)* Yeah right, loverboy. Sweet talk me all you want, but you know what Miss Monroe says: "Diamonds are a girl's best friend."

SAM: Yikes, can't your best friend be a little more affordable?

SARAH: *(Laughs, but then grows a bit nervous.)* Oh Sam, before I forget, well, my parents wanted me to invite you to dinner next Friday. There will be Shabbat prayers, but it's nothing too religious, it's just...they really want to meet the boy I've been telling them so much about.

SAM: *(Not making eye contact with her.)* That sounds terrific Sarah, but I think I have to ask Jimmy if it's okay with him. See, you know that we listen to the Dodgers game every Friday in the store and it wouldn't be fair to him if I just didn't show up.

SARAH: *(Frowning.)* Sam, we've been seeing each other for almost six months now and you've blown me off every single time I asked you to do something that would interrupt you spending time with him.

SAM: *(Apologetic.)* I know, I know, it's just, Jimmy and I are like family to each other and I mean, he needs me to be there so he doesn't go off getting into trouble.

SARAH: *(Still frowning.)* James is an adult. You don't need to watch over him like some mother hen.

SAM: No, see, you don't understand. I do need to watch over him. Since oreo, he's really had a bad time living a normal life. He's really all alone except for me, since his whole family is, well, dead. That's partly why we opened the grocery, to help ground him.

(Sarah sighs, clearly upset with the whole situation, pulling her hand away from Sam's.)

SARAH: Look... my Mama gives me an earful every time I go home. *(Changing to a shrill tone.)* "You're twenty six and the only one of my children not married. If we weren't Jewish, I'd ship you off to a nunnery!" So frankly, if you can't commit to us, Sam, then I think we should break it off. I don't want to wake up one day as an old maid, full of regrets.

SAM: *(Looks as though he's been slapped in the face.)* Wait, Sarah, I just, I never knew you felt that way. If you want to get engaged, we can get engaged. *(Beat.)* It's just...

SARAH: Just what?

SAM: *(Looking down, mumbling.)* I still need to ask Jimmy about Friday. I owe him that much...

SARAH: *(Grudgingly.)* Fine, Sam. Please just walk me home now. Ring me no later than tomorrow with your response.

(Sam and Sarah exit the stage in silence, the lights going down on stage left and open on stage right, set as the inside of an old grocery after closing time. Sam enters as a twenty-six year old James is putting cans on a shelf. Sam joins him.)

JAMES: Sammy! Where ya been?

SAM: I took Sarah to see a film.

JAMES: *(Snorting.)* Pfffft, You're still seein' that broad?

SAM: Yes Jimmy, I've been seeing her for almost six months now.

JAMES: Shit, seriously? Can't figure out how to dump her, eh? You always were a softie, Sammy.

SAM: I'm not planning on breaking up with her Jimmy; in fact, I think she might be "the one."

JAMES: The hell are you talking about? Which one?

SAM: *(Wistfully.)* You know, that special someone to spend the rest of my life with.

JAMES: Aww, and what am I, chopped liver?

SAM: *(Laughing.)* Jimmy, I'm just stopping by to let you that she invited me to dinner at her parents' house.

JAMES: So, what are ya tellin' me for?

SAM: Well, see, it's next Friday, so I wouldn't be able to come here and listen to the Dodgers game with you.

JAMES: *(Shrugging.)* So tell 'em to have you over on a different night.

SAM: No, Jimmy, it's not that simple. It's Shabbat dinner, and Sarah really, really wants me to be there.

JAMES: What, so you're gonna ditch me for some dame, Sammy?

SAM: *(Frowning.)* Jimmy, she's not just "some dame." This is the girl I'm going to ask to marry me.

JAMES: *(Angrily.)* You're fuckin' kidding me. I bet you think that's your own idea, right? Yer gonna be her fuckin' Prince Charming and sweep her off her feet with a ring and some damned vows. Sammy, who mentioned a wedding first, you or her? That's all I'm askin'.

SAM: *(Looking unsure.)* Well, I mean, she brought it up tonight. But that doesn't mean I haven't thought of the idea myself

JAMES: *(Interrupting.)* Yeah, that's what I thought. Sammy, I'm just trying to look out for you here. These broads today, all they care about is gettin' married. It's everything to them, right? I'm just lookin' out for my best pal. I don't want this "Sarah" to push you into anything. Gettin' hitched, Sammy, that's a huge thing. You can't just quit if you don't like it.

SAM: Yes, I know that, but

JAMES: And what about our store? I need you here, Sammy. We barely got any money as it is, and you think we could afford to hire folks to work here while you go off and try to raise a family?

SAM: It would definitely not be easy

JAMES: But shit, it's not like you can trust me, the fella who saved your life far more'n once in oreo.

SAM: *(Upset.)* Jimmy, you're being unfair. It's just one dinner.

JAMES: Oh sure, first it's just one night you can't come in, then a few more, and before long, I'm gonna be alone again just like after my Pop died. I'll probably end up dead myself, in an alley somewhere, and you wouldn't give a shit, off with your new family.

(Angered, Sam gives James a shove, knocking some cans to the ground, catching James off guard.)

SAM: Jimmy, you're talking bullshit, so shut up and listen. I'd never abandon you, no matter what. You know that without me having to spell it out. We're brothers, damn you, 'till the end. That will never change.

JAMES: *(Genuinely.)* I...I know, Sammy. I'm just scared is all. I've lost so much, and everyone I've ever known has left me, usually in a coffin. I just keep expectin' you to leave next, one way or another. Sometimes it's hard to remember that maybe all my brothers aren't gone.

(James looks at Sam with gratitude, and even a bit of respect.) And about Friday... I guess I see us listenin' to the dodgers as more'n just hanging out. It's a tradition to me, and breakin' a tradition, well, that scares me.

SAM: Jimmy

JAMES: *(Smiling now.)* Wait, wait, let me finish. If you really think goin' to yer girl's parents place for dinner is that important, then I'm not gonna stop you.

SAM: No Jimmy, I was going to say, if that's really how you feel, then I'll ask Sarah if I can come a different day. I don't think it should be too big of an issue. It's like I even just said, it's only one dinner, right?

JAMES: If she doesn't understand, then shit, she isn't good enough for you anyway, Sammy! Now would ya help me pick these damn cans up 'fore they roll out the front door?

(Sam laughs and gets helps James pick up the cans that dropped, then he gets ready to leave. Both look as though they might embrace, but instead simply nod at each other. Sam exits and the lights go down, opening back up on elderly Sam and James in center stage.)

Scene Five

SAM: *(Still speaking towards the audience.)* Sarah didn't understand, of course. She had every right not to, as she told me she wanted to get engaged, and I blew it. I chose my obligation to James over my love for her, and paid the price. I don't regret my decision though. I'm too old for regrets anyway, too old to be wishing what could have been and not what was. If I got married to Sarah back then and ended up having to close the grocery, there's no way Jimmy and I would as well off as we are now. Speaking of which...

(Sam turns back towards James, finally addressing him again, moving a checkers piece one space.)

SAM: Jimmy

JAMES: Well shit, you took so long to make a move, I thought you'd gone and had a stroke on me. I woulda been pissed, Sammy!

SAM: *(Ignoring him.)* Hey Jimmy, do you ever regret selling the store?

JAMES: Damn, that came outta left field. Lemme think about it... Hell no. I don't regret it one bit. I got more money than I know how to spend it now, Sammy. What kinda dumb question is that?

SAM: I was just curious. I mean, we raised that grocery from nothing into quite the thriving business, so I was just wondering if you thought it getting demolished after all those years bothered you in any way.

JAMES: Well sure, it was no fun to see half a life of memories bulldozed by some fancy "land developer," but did you really still wanna be working there? We came outta that deal with two million big ones each, Sammy. I'd say that was well worth the years we put into that old place. How 'bout yourself then, do you regret makin' that deal with those rich bastards?

SAM: *(Shakes his head.)* Jimmy, I tend agree with you on this one. We did the right thing, hopefully for the right reasons. And I definitely don't miss the sore tuckus I got from sitting behind the checkout counter all day.

JAMES: Or dealin' with some of those loonies that came in just before closin' time. Hell, I swear some o' them came straight outta those old horror movies you used to make me go see.

SAM: *(Laughing.)* How about the summers? I still remember schvitzing up a storm because we couldn't afford cooling for anywhere but the freezer.

JAMES: Sure I remember, Sammy, but what's this talk about regrets all of the sudden? You better not tell me yer dyin' or anything.

SAM: I've just had a spell of nostalgia lately, Jimmy, and I always end up with that same thought: If I could change anything, would I?

(Sam and James go silent, focusing on their still unfinished checkers game.)

JAMES: So fuckin' spit it out, would ya?

SAM: Well...no, actually. I used to think all the time about the things I'd change. What if I had never enlisted? What if I had married Sarah? What if we had kept the store?

JAMES: We're too old for "what ifs," Sammy. If ya spend all yer time with yer head stuck in the past, then what's the point of bein' alive now?

SAM: Exactly, Jimmy. You said that same thing to me a few years ago

JAMES: I did?

SAM: Yes, you senile old putz, you gave me that exact speech, and it really stuck with me. As much as I think of what could have been, I'm pretty darn content with how things turned out for me, for us.

JAMES: Yer gettin' pretty sappy right about now, Sammy. Shit, if you don't let up, I might have to start bawlin'. Just remember what I also told ya: if you don't get busy livin', then you better get busy dyin'.

SAM: It was Morgan Freeman who said that in *The Shawshank Redemption*, Jimmy.

JAMES: *(Snorts.)* Pfft, then he stole it from me.

SAM: *(Chuckling.)* Jimmy, you're no Morgan Freeman, that's for sure.

(James laughs, and their checkers game goes on in silence again.)

SAM: *(Confidently.)* Well, that's that.

JAMES: *(Looking at the board in dismay.)* Shit, now how did I let that happen...

(Sam finishes the game, jumping the remainder of James' pieces in one move. He draws out his move, flourishing each jump, winking at James as he wins.)

JAMES: Fuckin' shit, Sammy, and I had that winner's itch and everythin' today. *(beat)* Bah, well there's always next time.

SAM: *(Depositing the rest of his checkers pieces into his pocket, then standing slowly.)* Jimmy, you've never beat me, and you never will.

JAMES: Why can't we play a different game, whaddabout... chess?

SAM: *(Bursts into hoarse laughter.)* James McTigue playing chess! Now that I would pay to see.

JAMES: Yeah, yeah, well you can shove it. I'll win tomorrow, you just wait.

SAM: With baited breath.

(James stands as well, and the old friends shake hands.)

JAMES: Tomorrow then.

SAM: See you then, Jimmy.

(Sam and James turn and exit, leaving the opposite way from the other. The lights dim on center stage.)

Blackout

